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KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

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New Chronicles of REBECCA

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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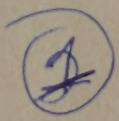

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NEW CHRONICLES OF REBECCA

A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP *and* THE DIARY OF A GOOSE GIRL

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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NEW CHRONICLES OF REBECCA

If thou couldst know thine own sweetness,
  O little one, perfect and sweet,
Thou wouldst be a child forever;
  Completer, whilst incomplete.

FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE.

NEW CHRONICLES OF REBECCA

FIRST CHRONICLE

JACK-O'-LANTERN

I

MISS MIRANDA SAWYER'S old-fashioned garden was the pleasantest spot in Riverboro on a sunny July morning.

The rich color of the brick house gleamed and glowed through the shade of the elms and maples. Luxuriant hop-vines clambered up the lightning-rods and water-spouts, hanging their delicate clusters here and there in graceful profusion. Woodbine transformed the old shed and tool-house to things of beauty, and the flower-beds themselves were the prettiest and most fragrant in all the countryside. A row of dahlias ran directly around the garden spot, — dahlias scarlet, gold, and variegated. In the very center was a round plot where the upturned faces of a thousand pansies smiled amid their leaves, and in the four corners were triangular blocks of sweet phlox over which the butterflies fluttered unceasingly. In the spaces

between ran a riot of portulaca and nasturtiums, while in the more regular, shell-bordered beds grew spirea and gillyflowers, mignonette, marigolds, and clove pinks.

Back of the barn and encroaching on the edge of the hay-field was a grove of sweet clover whose white feathery tips fairly bent under the assaults of the bees, while banks of aromatic mint and thyme drank in the sunshine and sent it out again into the summer air, warm and deliciously odorous.

The hollyhocks were Miss Sawyer's pride, and they grew in a stately line beneath the four kitchen windows, their tapering tips set thickly with gay satin circlets of pink or lavender or crimson.

"They grow something like steeples," thought little Rebecca Randall, who was weeding the bed, "and the flat, round flowers are like rosettes; but steeples would n't be studded with rosettes, so if you were writing about them in a composition you'd have to give up one or the other, and I think I'll give up the steeples: —

> Gay little hollyhock
> Lifting your head,
> Sweetly rosetted
> Out from your bed.

It's a pity the hollyhock is n't really little, instead of steepling up to the window-top, but I can't say, 'Gay *tall* hollyhock.' . . . I might

have it 'Lines to a Hollyhock in May,' for then it would be small; but oh, no! I forgot; in May it would n't be blooming, and it's so pretty to say that its head is 'sweetly rosetted.' . . . I wish the teacher was n't away; she would like 'sweetly rosetted,' and she would like to hear me recite 'Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!' that I learned out of Aunt Jane's Byron; the rolls come booming out of it just like the waves at the beach. . . . I could make nice compositions now, everything is booming so, and it's so warm and sunny and happy outdoors. Miss Dearborn told me to write something in my thought book every single day, and I'll begin this very night when I go to bed."

Rebecca Rowena Randall, the little niece of the brick-house ladies, and at present sojourning there for purposes of board, lodging, education, and incidentally such discipline and chastening as might ultimately produce moral excellence, — Rebecca Randall had a passion for the rhyme and rhythm of poetry. From her earliest childhood words had always been to her what dolls and toys are to other children, and now at twelve she amused herself with phrases and sentences and images as her schoolmates played with the pieces of their dissected puzzles. If the heroine of a story took a "cursory glance" about her "apartment," Rebecca

would shortly ask her Aunt Jane to take a "cursory glance" at her oversewing or hemming; if the villain "aided and abetted" some one in committing a crime, she would before long request the pleasure of "aiding and abetting" in dishwashing or bed-making. Sometimes she used the borrowed phrases unconsciously; sometimes she brought them into the conversation with an intense sense of pleasure in their harmony or appropriateness; for a beautiful word or sentence had the same effect upon her imagination as a fragrant nosegay, a strain of music, or a brilliant sunset.

"How are you gettin' on, Rebecca Rowena?" called a peremptory voice from within.

"Pretty good, Aunt Miranda; only I wish flowers would ever come up as thick as this pigweed and plantain and sorrel. What *makes* weeds be thick and flowers be thin? — I just happened to be stopping to think a minute when you looked out."

"You think considerable more than you weed, I guess, by appearances. How many times have you peeked into that hummingbird's nest? Why don't you work all to once and play all to once, like other folks?"

"I don't know," the child answered, confounded by the question, and still more by the apparent logic back of it. "I don't know, Aunt Miranda, but when I'm working outdoors such

a Saturday morning as this, the whole creation just screams to me to stop it and come and play."

"Well, you need n't go if it does!" responded her aunt sharply. "It don't scream to me when I 'm rollin' out these doughnuts, and it would n't to you if your mind was on your duty."

Rebecca's little brown hands flew in and out among the weeds as she thought rebelliously: "Creation *would n't* scream to Aunt Miranda; it would know she would n't come.

> Scream on, thou bright and gay creation, scream!
> 'T is not Miranda that will hear thy cry!

Oh, such funny, nice things come into my head out here by myself, I do wish I could run up and put them down in my thought book before I forget them, but Aunt Miranda would n't like me to leave off weeding: —

> Rebecca was weeding the hollyhock bed
> When wonderful thoughts came into her head.
> Her aunt was occupied with the rolling-pin
> And the thoughts of her mind were common and thin.

That would n't do because it 's mean to Aunt Miranda, and anyway it is n't good. I *must* crawl under the syringa shade a minute, it 's so hot, and anybody has to stop working once in a while, just to get their breath, even if they were n't making poetry.

Rebecca was weeding the hollyhock bed
When marvelous thoughts came into her head.
Miranda was wielding the rolling-pin
And thoughts at such times seemed to her as a sin.

How pretty the hollyhock rosettes look from down here on the sweet, smelly ground!

"Let me see what would go with rosetting. *Aiding and abetting, petting, hen-setting, fretting,* — there 's nothing very nice, but I can make 'fretting' do.

Cheered by Rowena's petting,
The flowers are rosetting,
But Aunt Miranda's fretting
Doth somewhat cloud the day."

Suddenly the sound of wagon wheels broke the silence and then a voice called out — a voice that could not wait until the feet that belonged to it reached the spot: "Miss Saw-*yer!* Father's got to drive over to North Riverboro on an errand, and please can Rebecca go, too, as it's Saturday morning and vacation besides?"

Rebecca sprang out from under the syringa-bush, eyes flashing with delight as only Rebecca's eyes *could* flash, her face one luminous circle of joyous anticipation. She clapped her grubby hands, and dancing up and down, cried: "May I, Aunt Miranda — can I, Aunt Jane — can I, Aunt Miranda-Jane? I'm more than half through the bed."

"If you finish your weeding to-night before

sundown I s'pose you can go, so long as Mr. Perkins has been good enough to ask you," responded Miss Sawyer reluctantly. "Take off that gingham apron and wash your hands clean at the pump. You ain't be'n out o' bed but two hours an' your head looks as rough as if you'd slep' in it. That comes from layin' on the ground same as a caterpillar. Smooth your hair down with your hands an' p'r'aps Emma Jane can braid it as you go along the road. Run up and get your second-best hair ribbon out o' your upper drawer and put on your shade-hat. No, you can't wear your coral chain — jewelry ain't appropriate in the morning. How long do you cal'late to be gone, Emma Jane?"

"I don't know. Father's just been sent for to see about a sick woman over to North Riverboro. She's got to go to the poor-farm."

This fragment of news speedily brought Miss Sawyer, and her sister Jane as well, to the door, which commanded a view of Mr. Perkins and his wagon. Mr. Perkins, the father of Rebecca's bosom friend, was primarily a blacksmith, and secondarily a selectman and an overseer of the poor, a man therefore possessed of wide and varied information.

"Who is it that's sick?" inquired Miranda.

"A woman over to North Riverboro."

"What's the trouble?"

"Can't say."

"Stranger?"

"Yes, and no; she's that wild daughter of old Nate Perry that used to live up towards Moderation. You remember she ran away to work in the factory at Milltown and married a do-nothin' fellow by the name o' John Winslow?"

"Yes; well, where is he? Why don't he take care of her?"

"They ain't worked well in double harness. They've been rovin' round the country, livin' a month here and a month there wherever they could get work and house-room. They quarreled a couple o' weeks ago and he left her. She and the little boy kind o' camped out in an old loggin' cabin back in the woods and she took in washin' for a spell; then she got terrible sick and ain't expected to live."

"Who's been nursing her?" inquired Miss Jane.

"Lizy Ann Dennett, that lives nearest neighbor to the cabin; but I guess she's tired out bein' good Samaritan. Anyways, she sent word this mornin' that nobody can't seem to find John Winslow; that there ain't no relations, and the town's got to be responsible, so I'm goin' over to see how the land lays. Climb in, Rebecca. You an' Emmy Jane crowd back on the cushion an' I'll set forrard. That's the trick! Now we're off!"

"Dear, dear!" sighed Jane Sawyer as the sisters walked back into the brick house. "I remember once seeing Sally Perry at meeting. She was a handsome girl, and I'm sorry she's come to grief."

"If she'd kep' on goin' to meetin' an' had n't looked at the men-folks she might 'a' be'n earnin' an honest livin' this minute," said Miranda. "Men-folks are at the bottom of everything wrong in this world," she continued, unconsciously reversing the verdict of history.

"Then we ought to be a happy and contented community here in Riverboro," replied Jane, "as there's six women to one man."

"If't was sixteen to one we'd be all the safer," responded Miranda grimly, putting the doughnuts in a brown crock in the cellar-way and slamming the door.

II

The Perkins horse and wagon rumbled along over the dusty country road, and after a discreet silence, maintained as long as human flesh could endure, Rebecca remarked sedately:

"It's a sad errand for such a shiny morning, is n't it, Mr. Perkins?"

"Plenty o' trouble in the world, Rebecky, shiny mornin's an' all," that good man replied. "If you want a bed to lay on, a roof over your head, an' food to eat, you've got to work for

'em. If I had n't 'a' labored early an' late, learned my trade, an' denied myself when I was young, I might 'a' be'n a pauper layin' sick in a loggin' cabin, 'stead o' bein' an overseer o' the poor an' selectman drivin' along to take the pauper to the poor-farm."

"People that are mortgaged don't have to go to the poor-farm, do they, Mr. Perkins?" asked Rebecca, with a shiver of fear as she remembered her home farm at Sunnybrook and the debt upon it; a debt which had lain like a shadow over her childhood.

"Bless your soul, no; not unless they fail to pay up; but Sal Perry an' her husband had n't got fur enough along in life to *be* mortgaged. You have to own something before you can mortgage it."

Rebecca's heart bounded as she learned that a mortgage represented a certain stage in worldly prosperity.

"Well," she said, sniffing in the fragrance of the new-mown hay and growing hopeful as she did so; "maybe the sick woman will be better such a beautiful day, and maybe the husband will come back to make it up and say he's sorry, and sweet content will reign in the humble habitation that was once the scene of poverty, grief, and despair. That's how it came out in a story I'm reading."

"I hain't noticed that life comes out like

stories very much," responded the pessimistic blacksmith, who, as Rebecca privately thought, had read less than half a dozen books in his long and prosperous career.

A drive of three or four miles brought the party to a patch of woodland where many of the tall pines had been hewn the previous winter. The roof of a ramshackle hut was outlined against a background of young birches, and a rough path made in hauling the logs to the main road led directly to its door.

As they drew near the figure of a woman approached — Mrs. Lizy Ann Dennett, in a gingham dress, with a calico apron over her head.

"Good-morning, Mr. Perkins," said the woman, who looked tired and irritable. "I'm real glad you come right over, for she took worse after I sent you word, and she's dead."

Dead! The word struck heavily and mysteriously on the children's ears. Dead! and their young lives, just begun, stretched on and on, all decked, like hope, in living green. Dead! and all the rest of the world reveling in strength. Dead! with all the daisies and buttercups waving in the fields and the men heaping the mown grass into fragrant cocks or tossing it into heavily laden carts. Dead! with the brooks tinkling after the summer showers, with the potatoes and corn blossoming, the birds singing

for joy, and every little insect humming and chirping, adding its note to the blithe chorus of warm, throbbing life.

"I was all alone with her. She passed away suddenly jest about break o' day," said Lizy Ann Dennett.

> Her soul passed upward to its God
> Just at the break of day.

These words came suddenly into Rebecca's mind from a tiny chamber where such things were wont to lie quietly until something brought them to the surface. She could not remember whether she had heard them at a funeral or read them in the hymn book or made them up "out of her own head," but she was so thrilled with the idea of dying just as the dawn was breaking that she scarcely heard Mrs. Dennett's conversation.

"I sent for Aunt Beulah Day, an' she's be'n here an' laid her out," continued the long-suffering Lizy Ann. "She ain't got any folks, an' John Winslow ain't never had any as far back as I can remember. She belongs to your town and you'll have to bury her and take care of Jacky — that's the boy. He's seventeen months old, a bright little feller, the image o' John, but I can't keep him another day. I'm all wore out; my own baby's sick, mother's rheumatiz is extry bad, and my husband's

comin' home to-night from his week's work. If he finds a child o' John Winslow's under his roof I can't say what would happen; you'll have to take him back with you to the poor-farm."

"I can't take him up there this afternoon," objected Mr. Perkins.

"Well, then, keep him over Sunday yourself; he's good as a kitten. John Winslow'll hear o' Sal's death sooner or later, unless he's gone out o' the state altogether, an' when he knows the boy's at the poor-farm I kind o' think he'll come and claim him. Could you drive me over to the village to see about the coffin, and would you children be afraid to stay here alone for a spell?" she asked, turning to the girls.

"Afraid?" they both echoed uncomprehendingly.

Lizy Ann and Mr. Perkins, perceiving that the fear of a dead presence had not entered the minds of Rebecca or Emma Jane, said nothing, but drove off together, counseling them not to stray far away from the cabin and promising to be back in an hour.

There was not a house within sight, either looking up or down the shady road, and the two girls stood hand in hand, watching the wagon out of sight; then they sat down quietly under a tree, feeling all at once a nameless de-

pression hanging over their gay summer-morning spirits.

It was very still in the woods; just the chirp of a grasshopper now and then, or the note of a bird, or the click of a far-distant mowing-machine.

"We're '*watching*'!" whispered Emma Jane. "They watched with Gran'pa Perkins, and there was a great funeral and two ministers. He left two thousand dollars in the bank and a store full of goods, and a paper thing you could cut tickets off of twice a year, and they were just like money."

"They watched with my little sister Mira, too," said Rebecca. "You remember when she died, and I went home to Sunnybrook Farm? It was winter-time, but she was covered with evergreen and white pinks, and there was singing."

"There won't be any funeral or ministers or singing here, will there? Is n't that awful?"

"I s'pose not; and oh, Emma Jane, no flowers either. We might get those for her if there's nobody else to do it."

"Would you dare put them on to her?" asked Emma Jane, in a hushed voice.

"I don't know; I can't tell; it makes me shiver, but, of course, we *could* do it if we were the only friends she had. Let's look into the cabin first and be perfectly sure that there are n't any. Are you afraid?"

"N-no; I guess not. I looked at Gran'pa Perkins, and he was just the same as ever."

At the door of the hut Emma Jane's courage suddenly departed. She held back shuddering and refused either to enter or look in. Rebecca shuddered too, but kept on, drawn by an insatiable curiosity about life and death, an overmastering desire to know and feel and understand the mysteries of existence, a hunger for knowledge and experience at all hazards and at any cost.

Emma Jane hurried softly away from the felt terrors of the cabin, and after two or three minutes of utter silence Rebecca issued from the open door, her sensitive face pale and woebegone, the ever-ready tears raining down her cheeks. She ran toward the edge of the wood, sinking down by Emma Jane's side, and covering her eyes, sobbed with excitement: —

"Oh, Emma Jane, she has n't got a flower, and she 's so tired and sad-looking, as if she'd been hurt and hurt and never had any good times, and there's a weeny, weeny baby 'side of her. Oh, I wish I had n't gone in!"

Emma Jane blenched for an instant. "Mrs. Dennett never said *there was two dead ones! Is n't that dreadful?* But," she continued, her practical common sense coming to the rescue, "you've been in once and it's all over; it won't be so bad when you take in the flowers because

you'll be used to it. The goldenrod has n't begun to bud, so there's nothing to pick but daisies. Shall I make a long rope of them, as I did for the schoolroom?"

"Yes," said Rebecca, wiping her eyes and still sobbing. "Yes, that's the prettiest, and if we put it all round her like a frame the undertaker could n't be so cruel as to throw it away, even if she is a pauper, because it will look so beautiful. From what the Sunday-School lessons say, she's only asleep now, and when she wakes up she'll be in heaven."

"*There's another place*," said Emma Jane, in an orthodox and sepulchral whisper, as she took her ever-present ball of crochet cotton from her pocket and began to twine the whiteweed blossoms into a rope.

"Oh, well!" Rebecca replied with the easy theology that belonged to her temperament. "They simply could n't send her *down there* with that little weeny baby. Who'd take care of it? You know page six of the catechism says the only companions of the wicked after death are their father the devil and all the other evil angels; it would n't be any place to bring up a baby."

"Whenever and wherever she wakes up, I hope she won't know that the big baby is going to the poor-farm. I wonder where he is?"

"Perhaps over to Mrs. Dennett's house. She did n't seem sorry a bit, did she?"

"No, but I suppose she 's tired sitting up and nursing a stranger. Mother was n't sorry when Gran'pa Perkins died; she could n't be, for he was cross all the time and had to be fed like a child. Why *are* you crying again, Rebecca?"

"Oh, I don't know, I can't tell, Emma Jane! Only I don't want to die and have no funeral or singing and nobody sorry for me! I just could n't bear it!"

"Neither could I," Emma Jane responded sympathetically; "but p'r'aps if we're real good and die young before we have to be fed, they will be sorry. I do wish you could write some poetry for her as you did for Alice Robinson's canary-bird, only still better, of course, like that you read me out of your thought book."

"I could, easy enough," exclaimed Rebecca, somewhat consoled by the idea that her rhyming faculty could be of any use in such an emergency. "Though I don't know but it would be kind of bold to do it. I 'm all puzzled about how people get to heaven after they're buried. I can't understand it a bit; but if the poetry is on her, what if that should go, too? And how could I write anything good enough to be read out loud in heaven?"

"A little piece of paper could n't get to heaven; it just could n't," asserted Emma Jane decisively. "It would be all blown to pieces and dried up. And nobody knows that the angels can read writing, anyway."

"They must be as educated as we are, and more so, too," argued Rebecca. "They must be more than just dead people, or else why should they have wings? But I'll go off and write something while you finish the rope; it's lucky you brought your crochet cotton and I my lead pencil."

In fifteen or twenty minutes she returned with some lines written on a scrap of brown wrapping paper. Standing soberly by Emma Jane, she said, preparing to read them aloud: "They're not good; I was afraid your father'd come back before I finished, and the first verse sounds exactly like the funeral hymns in the church book. I could n't call her Sally Winslow; it did n't seem nice when I did n't know her and she is dead, so I thought if I said 'friend' it would show she had somebody to be sorry."

This friend of ours has died and gone
  From us to heaven to live.
If she has sinned against Thee, Lord,
  We pray Thee, Lord, forgive.

Her husband runneth far away
  And knoweth not she's dead.
Oh, bring him back — ere 't is too late —
  To mourn beside her bed.

And if perchance it can't be so,
  Be to the children kind;
The weeny one that goes with her,
  The other left behind.

"I think that's perfectly elegant!" exclaimed Emma Jane, kissing Rebecca fervently. "You are the smartest girl in the whole State of Maine, and it sounds like a minister's prayer. I wish we could save up and buy a printing-machine. Then I could learn to print what you write and we'd be partners like father and Bill Moses. Shall you sign it with your name like we do our school compositions?"

"No," said Rebecca soberly. "I certainly shan't sign it, not knowing where it's going or who'll read it. I shall just hide it in the flowers, and whoever finds it will guess that there was n't any minister or singing, or gravestone, or anything, so somebody just did the best they could."

III

The tired mother with the "weeny baby" on her arm lay on a long carpenter's bench, her earthly journey over, and when Rebecca stole in and placed the flowery garland all along the edge of the rude bier, death suddenly took on a more gracious and benign aspect. It was only a child's sympathy and intuition that softened the rigors of the sad moment, but poor, wild

Sal Winslow, in her frame of daisies, looked as if she were missed a little by an unfriendly world; while the weeny baby, whose heart had fallen asleep almost as soon as it had learned to beat, the weeny baby, with Emma Jane's nosegay of buttercups in its tiny wrinkled hand, smiled as if it might have been loved and longed for and mourned.

"We've done all we can now without a minister," whispered Rebecca. "We could sing, 'God is ever good' out of the Sunday-School song-book, but I'm afraid somebody would hear us and think we were gay and happy. — What's that?"

A strange sound broke the stillness: a gurgle, a yawn, a merry little call. The two girls ran in the direction from which it came, and there, on an old coat, in a clump of goldenrod bushes, lay a child just waking from a refreshing nap.

"It's the other baby that Lizy Ann Dennett told about!" cried Emma Jane.

"Is n't he beautiful!" exclaimed Rebecca. "Come straight to me!" and she stretched out her arms.

The child struggled to its feet, and tottered, wavering, toward the warm welcome of the voice and eyes. Rebecca was all mother, and her maternal instincts had been well developed in the large family in which she was next to the eldest. She had always confessed that there

were perhaps a trifle too many babies at Sunnybrook Farm, but, nevertheless, had she ever heard it, she would have stood loyally by the Japanese proverb: "Whether brought forth upon the mountain or in the field, it matters nothing; more than a treasure of one thousand *ryō* a baby precious is."

"You darling thing!" she crooned, as she caught and lifted the child. "You look just like a jack-o'-lantern."

The boy was clad in a yellow cotton dress, very full and stiff. His hair was of such a bright gold, and so sleek and shiny, that he looked like a fair, smooth little pumpkin. He had wide blue eyes full of laughter, a neat little vertical nose, a neat little horizontal mouth with his few neat little teeth showing very plainly, and on the whole Rebecca's figure of speech was not so wide of the mark.

"Oh, Emma Jane! Is n't he too lovely to go to the poor-farm? If only we were married we could keep him and say nothing and nobody would know the difference! Now that the Simpsons have gone away there is n't a single baby in Riverboro, and only one in Edgewood. It's a perfect shame, but I can't do anything; you remember Aunt Miranda would n't let me have the Simpson baby when I wanted to borrow her just for one rainy Sunday."

"My mother won't keep him, so it's no use

to ask her; she says 'most every day she's glad we're grown up, and she thanks the Lord there was n't but two of us."

"And Mrs. Peter Meserve is too nervous," Rebecca went on, taking the village houses in turn; "and Mrs. Robinson is too neat."

"People don't seem to like any but their own babies," observed Emma Jane.

"Well, I can't understand it," Rebecca answered. "A baby's a baby, I should think, whose ever it is! Miss Dearborn is coming back Monday; I wonder if she'd like it? She has nothing to do out of school, and we could borrow it all the time!"

"I don't think it would seem very genteel for a young lady like Miss Dearborn, who 'boards round,' to take a baby from place to place," objected Emma Jane.

"Perhaps not," agreed Rebecca despondently, "but I think if we have n't got any — any — *private* babies in Riverboro we ought to have one for the town, and all have a share in it. We've got a town hall and a town lamp-post and a town watering-trough. Things are so uneven! One house like mine at Sunnybrook, brimful of children, and the very next one empty! The only way to fix them right would be to let all the babies that ever are belong to all the grown-up people that ever are, — just divide them up, you know, if they'd go round.

— Oh, I have a thought! Don't you believe Aunt Sarah Cobb would keep him? She carries flowers to the graveyard every little while, and once she took me with her. There's a marble cross, and it says: *Sacred to the memory of Sarah Ellen, beloved child of Sarah and Jeremiah Cobb, aged seventeen months.* Why, that's another reason; Mrs. Dennett says this one is seventeen months. There's five of us left at the farm without me, but if we were only nearer to Riverboro, how quick mother would let in one more!"

"We might see what father thinks, and that would settle it," said Emma Jane. "Father does n't think very sudden, but he thinks awful strong. If we don't bother him, and find a place ourselves for the baby, perhaps he'll be willing. He's coming now; I hear the wheels."

Lizy Ann Dennett volunteered to stay and perform the last rites with the undertaker, and Jack-o'-Lantern, with his slender wardrobe tied in a bandanna handkerchief, was lifted into the wagon by the reluctant Mr. Perkins, and jubilantly held by Rebecca in her lap. Mr. Perkins drove off as speedily as possible, being heartily sick of the whole affair, and thinking wisely that the little girls had already seen and heard more than enough of the seamy side of life that morning.

Discussion concerning Jack-o'-Lantern's future was prudently deferred for a quarter of an

hour, and then Mr. Perkins was mercilessly pelted with arguments against the choice of the poor-farm as a place of residence for a baby.

"His father is sure to come back some time, Mr. Perkins," urged Rebecca. "He could n't leave this beautiful thing forever; and if Emma Jane and I can persuade Mrs. Cobb to keep him a little while, would you care?"

No; on reflection Mr. Perkins did not care. He merely wanted a quiet life and enough time left over from the public service to attend to his blacksmith's shop; so instead of going home over the same road by which they came he crossed the bridge into Edgewood and dropped the children at the long lane which led to the Cobb house.

Mrs. Cobb, "Aunt Sarah" to the whole village, sat by the window looking for Uncle Jerry, who would soon be seen driving the noon stage to the post-office over the hill. She always had an eye out for Rebecca, too, for ever since the child had been a passenger on Mr. Cobb's stagecoach, making the eventful trip from her home farm to the brick house in Riverboro in his company, she had been a constant visitor and the joy of the quiet household. Emma Jane, too, was a well-known figure in the lane, but the strange baby was in the nature of a surprise — a surprise somewhat modified by the fact that Rebecca was a dramatic personage

and more liable to appear in conjunction with curious outriders, comrades, and retainers than the ordinary Riverboro child. She had run away from the too stern discipline of the brick house on one occasion, and had been persuaded to return by Uncle Jerry. She had escorted a wandering organ-grinder to their door and begged a lodging for him on a rainy night; so on the whole there was nothing amazing about the coming procession.

The little party toiled up to the hospitable door, and Mrs. Cobb came out to meet them.

Rebecca was spokesman. Emma Jane's talent did not lie in eloquent speech, but it would have been a valiant and a fluent child indeed who could have usurped Rebecca's privileges and tendencies in this direction, language being her native element, and words of assorted sizes springing spontaneously to her lips.

"Aunt Sarah, dear," she said, plumping Jack-o'-Lantern down on the grass as she pulled his dress over his feet and smoothed his hair becomingly, "will you please not say a word till I get through — as it's very important you should know everything before you answer yes or no? This is a baby named Jacky Winslow, and I think he looks like a jack-o'-lantern. His mother has just died over to North Riverboro, all alone, excepting for Mrs. Lizy Ann Dennett, and there was another little weeny baby that

died with her, and Emma Jane and I put flowers around them and did the best we could. The father — that's John Winslow — quarreled with the mother — that was Sal Perry on the Moderation Road — and ran away and left her. So he does n't know his wife and the weeny baby are dead. And the town has got to bury them because they can't find the father right off quick, and Jacky has got to go to the poor-farm this afternoon. And it seems an awful shame to take him up to that lonesome place with those old people that can't amuse him, and if Emma Jane and Alice Robinson and I take 'most all the care of him we thought perhaps you and Uncle Jerry would keep him just for a little while. You've got a cow and a turn-up bedstead, you know," she hurried on insinuatingly, "and there's hardly any pleasure as cheap as more babies where there's ever been any before, for baby carriages and trundle-beds and cradles don't wear out, and there's always clothes left over from the old baby to begin the new one on. Of course, we can collect enough things to start Jacky, so he won't be much trouble or expense; and anyway, he's past the most troublesome age and you won't have to be up nights with him, and he is n't afraid of anybody or anything, as you can see by his just sitting there laughing and sucking his thumb, though he does n't know what's going to be-

come of him. And he's just seventeen months old like dear little Sarah Ellen in the graveyard, and we thought we ought to give you the refusal of him before he goes to the poor-farm, and what do you think about it? Because it's near my dinner-time and Aunt Miranda will keep me in the whole afternoon if I'm late, and I've got to finish weeding the hollyhock bed before sundown."

IV

Mrs. Cobb had enjoyed a considerable period of reflection during this monologue, and Jacky had not used the time unwisely, offering several unconscious arguments and suggestions to the matter under discussion; lurching over on the greensward and righting himself with a chuckle, kicking his bare feet about in delight at the sunshine and groping for his toes with arms too short to reach them, the movement involving an entire upsetting of equilibrium followed by more chuckles.

Coming down the last of the stone steps, Sarah Ellen's mother regarded the baby with interest and sympathy.

"Poor little mite!" she said; "that does n't know what he's lost and what's going to happen to him. Seems to me we might keep him a spell till we're sure his father's deserted him for good. Want to come to Aunt Sarah, baby?"

Jack-o'-Lantern turned from Rebecca and Emma Jane and regarded the kind face gravely; then he held out both his hands and Mrs. Cobb, stooping, gathered him like a harvest. Being lifted into her arms, he at once tore her spectacles from her nose and laughed aloud. Taking them from him gently, she put them on again, and set him in the cushioned rocking-chair under the lilac bushes beside the steps. Then she took one of his soft hands in hers and patted it, and fluttered her fingers like birds before his eyes, and snapped them like castanets, remembering all the arts she had lavished upon "Sarah Ellen, aged seventeen months," years and years ago.

> Motherless baby and babyless mother,
> Bring them together to love one another.

Rebecca knew nothing of this couplet, but she saw clearly enough that her case was won.

"The boy must be hungry; when was he fed last?" asked Mrs. Cobb. "Just stay a second longer while I get him some morning's milk; then you run home to your dinners and I'll speak to Mr. Cobb this afternoon. Of course, we can keep the baby for a week or two till we see what happens. Land! he ain't goin' to be any more trouble than a wax doll! I guess he ain't been used to much attention, and that kind's always the easiest to take care of."

At six o'clock that evening Rebecca and Emma Jane flew up the hill and down the lane again, waving their hands to the dear old couple who were waiting for them in the usual place, the back piazza where they had sat so many summers in a blessed companionship never marred by an unloving word.

"Where's Jacky?" called Rebecca breathlessly, her voice always outrunning her feet.

"Go up to my chamber, both of you, if you want to see," smiled Mrs. Cobb, "only don't wake him up."

The girls went softly up the stairs into Aunt Sarah's room. There, in the turn-up bedstead that had been so long empty, slept Jack-o'-Lantern, in blissful unconsciousness of the doom he had so lately escaped. His nightgown and pillow-case were clean and fragrant with lavender, but they were both as yellow as saffron, for they had belonged to Sarah Ellen.

"I wish his mother could see him!" whispered Emma Jane.

"You can't tell; it's all puzzly about heaven, and perhaps she does," said Rebecca, as they turned reluctantly from the fascinating scene and stole down to the piazza.

It was a beautiful and a happy summer that year, and every day of it was filled with blissful plays and still more blissful duties. On the

Monday after Jack-o'-Lantern's arrival in Edgewood Rebecca founded the Riverboro Aunts Association. The Aunts were Rebecca, Emma Jane, Alice Robinson, and Minnie Smellie, and each of the first three promised to labor for and amuse the visiting baby for two days a week, Minnie Smellie, who lived at some distance from the Cobbs, making herself responsible for Saturday afternoons.

Minnie Smellie was not a general favorite among the Riverboro girls, and it was only in an unprecedented burst of magnanimity that they admitted her into the rites of fellowship, Rebecca hugging herself secretly at the thought, that as Minnie gave only the leisure time of one day a week, she could not be called a "full" Aunt. There had been long and bitter feuds between the two children during Rebecca's first summer in Riverboro, but since Mrs. Smellie had told her daughter that one more quarrel would invite a punishment so terrible that it could only be hinted at vaguely, and Miss Miranda Sawyer had remarked that any niece of hers who could n't get along peaceably with the neighbors had better go back to the seclusion of a farm where there were n't any, hostilities had been veiled, and a suave and diplomatic relationship had replaced the former one, which had been wholly primitive, direct, and barbaric. Still, whenever Minnie

Great, though Friendly, was the Rivalry between them

Smellie, flaxen-haired, pink-nosed, and ferret-eyed, indulged in fluent conversation, Rebecca, remembering the old fairy story, could always see toads hopping out of her mouth. It was really very unpleasant, because Minnie could never see them herself; and what was more amazing, Emma Jane perceived nothing of the sort, being almost as blind, too, to the diamonds that fell continually from Rebecca's lips; but Emma Jane's strong point was not her imagination.

A shaky perambulator was found in Mrs. Perkins's wonderful attic; shoes and stockings were furnished by Mrs. Robinson; Miss Jane Sawyer knitted a blanket and some shirts; Thirza Meserve, though too young for an Aunt, coaxed from her mother some dresses and nightgowns, and was presented with a green paper certificate allowing her to wheel Jacky up and down the road for an hour under the superintendence of a full Aunt. Each girl, under the constitution of the association, could call Jacky "hers" for two days in the week, and great, though friendly, was the rivalry between them, as they washed, ironed, and sewed for their adored nephew.

If Mrs. Cobb had not been the most amiable woman in the world she might have had difficulty in managing the Aunts, but she always had Jacky to herself the earlier part of the day and after dusk at night.

Meanwhile Jack-o'-Lantern grew healthier and heartier and jollier as the weeks slipped away. Uncle Jerry joined the little company of worshipers and slaves, and one fear alone stirred in all their hearts; not, as a sensible and practical person might imagine, the fear that the recreant father might never return to claim his child, but, on the contrary, that he *might* do so!

October came at length with its cheery days and frosty nights, its glory of crimson leaves and its golden harvest of pumpkins and ripened corn. Rebecca had been down by the Edgewood side of the river and had come up across the pastures for a good-night play with Jacky. Her literary labors had been somewhat interrupted by the joys and responsibilities of vice-motherhood, and the thought book was less frequently drawn from its hiding place under the old haymow in the barn chamber.

Mrs. Cobb stood behind the screen door with her face pressed against the wire netting, and Rebecca could see that she was wiping her eyes.

All at once the child's heart gave one prophetic throb and then stood still. She was like a harp that vibrated with every wind of emotion, whether from another's grief or her own.

She looked down the lane, around the curve of the stone wall red with woodbine, the lane

that would meet the stage road to the station. There, just mounting the crown of the hill and about to disappear on the other side, strode a stranger man, big and tall, with a crop of reddish curly hair showing from under his straw hat. A woman walked by his side, and perched on his shoulder, wearing his most radiant and triumphant mien, as joyous in leaving Edgewood as he had been during every hour of his sojourn there — rode Jack-o'-Lantern!

Rebecca gave a cry in which maternal longing and helpless, hopeless jealousy strove for supremacy. Then, with an impetuous movement she started to run after the disappearing trio.

Mrs. Cobb opened the door hastily, calling after her, "Rebecca, Rebecca, come back here! You must n't follow where you have n't any right to go. If there'd been anything to say or do, I'd 'a' done it."

"He's mine! he's mine!" stormed Rebecca. "At least he's yours and mine!"

"He's his father's first of all," faltered Mrs. Cobb; "don't let's forget that; and we'd ought to be glad an' grateful that John Winslow's come to his senses an' remembers he's brought a child into the world and ought to take care of it. Our loss is his gain and it may make a man of him. Come in, and we'll put things away all neat before your Uncle Jerry gets home."

Rebecca sank in a pitiful little heap on Mrs. Cobb's bedroom floor and sobbed her heart out. "Oh, Aunt Sarah, where shall we get another Jack-o'-Lantern, and how shall I break it to Emma Jane? What if his father does n't love him, and what if he forgets to strain the milk or lets him go without his nap? That's the worst of babies that are n't private — you have to part with them sooner or later!"

"Sometimes you have to part with your own, too," said Mrs. Cobb sadly; and though there were lines of sadness in her face there was neither rebellion nor repining, as she folded up the sides of the turn-up bedstead preparatory to banishing it a second time to the attic. "I shall miss Sarah Ellen now more'n ever. Still, Rebecca, we must n't feel to complain. It's the Lord that giveth and the Lord that taketh away: Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Oh, Aunt Sarah, where shall we get another Jack-o'-Lantern?"

SECOND CHRONICLE

DAUGHTERS OF ZION

I

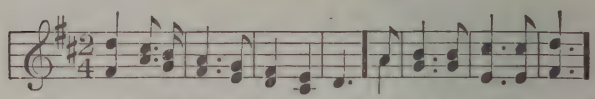
ABIJAH FLAGG was driving over to Wareham on an errand for old Squire Winship, whose general chore-boy and farmer's assistant he had been for some years.

He passed Emma Jane Perkins's house slowly, as he always did. She was only a little girl of thirteen and he a boy of fifteen or sixteen, but somehow, for no particular reason, he liked to see the sun shine on her thick braids of reddish-brown hair. He admired her china-blue eyes too, and her amiable, friendly expression. He was quite alone in the world, and he always thought that if he had anybody belonging to him he would rather have a sister like Emma Jane Perkins than anything else within the power of Providence to bestow. When she herself suggested this relationship a few years later he cast it aside with scorn, having changed his mind in the interval — but that story belongs to another time and place.

Emma Jane was not to be seen in garden, field, or at the window, and Abijah turned his gaze to the large brick house that came next on

the other side of the quiet village street. It might have been closed for a funeral. Neither Miss Miranda nor Miss Jane Sawyer sat at their respective windows knitting, nor was Rebecca Randall's gypsy face to be discerned. Ordinarily that will-o'-the-wispish little person could be seen, heard, or felt wherever she was.

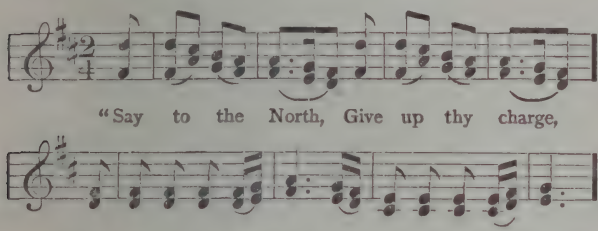
"The village must be abed, I guess," mused Abijah, as he neared the Robinsons' yellow cottage, where all the blinds were closed and no sign of life showed on porch or in shed. "No, 't ain't, neither," he thought again, as his horse crept cautiously down the hill, for from the direction of the Robinsons' barn chamber there floated out into the air certain burning sentiments set to the tune of "Antioch." The words, to a lad brought up in the orthodox faith, were quite distinguishable: —



Even the most religious youth is stronger on first lines than others, but Abijah pulled up his horse and waited till he caught another familiar verse, beginning: —

> Rebuild thy walls, thy bounds enlarge,
> And send thy heralds forth.

"That's Rebecca carrying the air, and I can hear Emma Jane's alto."



"Land! ain't they smart, seesawin' up and down in that part they learnt in singin' school! I wonder what they're actin' out, singin' hymn-tunes up in the barn chamber? Some o' Rebecca's doin's, I'll be bound! Git dap, Aleck!"

Aleck pursued his serene and steady trot up the hills on the Edgewood side of the river, till at length he approached the green Common where the old Tory Hill meeting-house stood, its white paint and green blinds showing fair and pleasant in the afternoon sun. Both doors were open, and as Abijah turned into the Wareham road the church melodeon pealed out the opening bars of the Missionary Hymn, and presently a score of voices sent the good old tune from the choir-loft out to the dusty road:

Shall we whose souls are lighted
  With wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted
  The lamp of life deny?

"Land!" exclaimed Abijah under his breath. "They're at it up here, too! That explains it all. There's a missionary meeting at the church, and the girls wa'n't allowed to come so they held one o' their own, and I bate ye it's the liveliest of the two."

Abijah Flagg's shrewd Yankee guesses were not far from the truth, though he was not in possession of all the facts. It will be remembered by those who have been in the way of hearing Rebecca's experiences in Riverboro, that the Rev. and Mrs. Burch, returned missionaries from the Far East, together with some of their children, — "all born under Syrian skies," as they always explained to interested inquirers, — spent a day or two at the brick house, and gave parlor meetings in native costume.

These visitors, coming straight from foreign lands to the little Maine village, brought with them a nameless enchantment to the children, and especially to Rebecca, whose imagination always kindled easily. The romance of that visit had never died in her heart, and among the many careers that dazzled her youthful vision was that of converting such Syrian heathen as might continue in idol worship after the Burches' efforts in their behalf had ceased. She thought at the age of eighteen she might be suitably equipped for storming some minor

citadel of Mohammedanism; and Mrs. Burch had encouraged her in the idea, not, it is to be feared, because Rebecca showed any surplus of virtue or Christian grace, but because her gift of language, her tact and sympathy, and her musical talent seemed to fit her for the work.

It chanced that the quarterly meeting of the Maine Missionary Society had been appointed just at the time when a letter from Mrs. Burch to Miss Jane Sawyer suggested that Rebecca should form a children's branch in Riverboro. Mrs. Burch's real idea was that the young people should save their pennies and divert a gentle stream of financial aid into the parent fund, thus learning early in life to be useful in such work, either at home or abroad.

The girls themselves, however, read into her letter no such modest participation in the conversion of the world, and wishing to effect an organization without delay, they chose an afternoon when every house in the village was vacant, and seized upon the Robinsons' barn chamber as the place of meeting.

Rebecca, Alice Robinson, Emma Jane Perkins, Candace Milliken, and Persis Watson, each with her hymn-book, had climbed the ladder leading to the haymow a half-hour before Abijah Flagg had heard the strains of "Daughter of Zion" floating out to the road. Rebecca, being an executive person, had carried, besides

her hymn-book, a silver call-bell and pencil and paper. An animated discussion regarding one of two names for the society, The Junior Heralds or The Daughters of Zion, had resulted in a unanimous vote for the latter, and Rebecca had been elected president at an early stage of the meeting. She had modestly suggested that Alice Robinson, as the granddaughter of a missionary to China, would be much more eligible.

"No," said Alice, with entire good nature, "whoever is *elected* president, you *will* be, Rebecca — you're that kind — so you might as well have the honor; I'd just as lieves be secretary, anyway."

"If you should want me to be treasurer, I could be, as well as not," said Persis Watson suggestively; "for you know my father keeps china banks at his store — ones that will hold as much as two dollars if you will let them. I think he'd give us one if I happen to be treasurer."

The three principal officers were thus elected at one fell swoop and with an entire absence of that red tape which commonly renders organization so tiresome, Candace Milliken suggesting that perhaps she'd better be vice-president, as Emma Jane Perkins was always so bashful.

"We ought to have more members," she reminded the other girls, "but if we had invited

them the first day they'd have all wanted to be officers, especially Minnie Smellie, so it's just as well not to ask them till another time. Is Thirza Meserve too little to join?"

"I can't think why anybody named Meserve should have called a baby Thirza," said Rebecca, somewhat out of order, though the meeting was carried on with small recognition of parliamentary laws. "It aways makes me want to say: —

> Thirza Meserver,
> Heaven preserve her!

or

> Thirza Meserver
> Do we deserve her?

She's little, but she's sweet, and absolutely without guile. I think we ought to have her."

"Is 'guile' the same as guilt?" inquired Emma Jane Perkins.

"Yes," the president answered; "exactly the same, except one is written and the other spoken language." (Rebecca was rather good at imbibing information, and a master hand at imparting it!) "Written language is for poems and graduations and occasions like this — kind of like a best Sunday-go-to-meeting dress that you would n't like to go blueberrying in for fear of getting it spotted."

"I'd just as lieves get 'guile' spotted as not," affirmed the unimaginative Emma Jane. "I think it's an awful foolish word; but now we're

all named and our officers elected, what do we do first? It's easy enough for Mary and Martha Burch; they just play at missionarying because their folks work at it, same as Living and I used to make believe be blacksmiths when we were little."

"It must be nicer missionarying in those foreign places," said Persis, "because on 'Afric's shores and India's plains and other spots where Satan reigns' (that's father's favorite hymn) there's always a heathen bowing down to wood and stone. You can take away his idols if he'll let you and give him a Bible and the beginning's all made. But who'll we begin on? Jethro Small?"

"Oh, he's entirely too dirty, and foolish besides!" exclaimed Candace. "Why not Ethan Hunt? He swears dreadfully."

"He lives on nuts and is a hermit, and it's a mile to his camp through the thick woods; my mother'll never let me go there," objected Alice. "There's Uncle Tut Judson."

"He's too old; he's most a hundred and deaf as a post," complained Emma Jane. "Besides, his married daughter is a Sabbath-School teacher — why does n't she teach him to behave? I can't think of anybody just right to start on!"

"Don't talk like that, Emma Jane," and Rebecca's tone had a tinge of reproof in it.

"We are a copperated body named the Daughters of Zion"

"We are a copperated body named the Daughters of Zion, and, of course, we've got to find something to do. Foreigners are the easiest; there's a Scotch family at North Riverboro, an English one in Edgewood, and one Cuban man at Milliken's Mills."

"Have n't foreigners got any religion of their own?" inquired Persis curiously.

"Ye-es, I s'pose so; kind of a one; but foreigners' religions are never right — ours is the only good one." This was from Candace, the deacon's daughter.

"I do think it must be dreadful, being born with a religion and growing up with it, and then finding out it's no use and all your time wasted!" Here Rebecca sighed, chewed a straw, and looked troubled.

"Well, that's your punishment for being a heathen," retorted Candace, who had been brought up strictly.

"But I can't for the life of me see how you can help being a heathen if you're born in Africa," persisted Persis, who was well named.

"You can't." Rebecca was clear on this point. "I had that all out with Mrs. Burch when she was visiting Aunt Miranda. She says they can't help being heathen, but if there's a single mission station in the whole of Africa, they're accountable if they don't go there and get saved."

"Are there plenty of stages and railroads?" asked Alice; "because there must be dreadfully long distances, and what if they could n't pay the fare?"

"That part of it is so dreadfully puzzly we must n't talk about it, please," said Rebecca, her sensitive face quivering with the force of the problem. Poor little soul! She did not realize that her superiors in age and intellect had spent many a sleepless night over that same "accountability of the heathen."

"It's too bad the Simpsons have moved away," said Candace. "It's so seldom you can find a real big wicked family like that to save, with only Clara Belle and Susan good in it."

"And numbers count for so much," continued Alice. "My grandmother says if missionaries can't convert about so many in a year the Board advises them to come back to America and take up some other work."

"I know," Rebecca corroborated; "and it's the same with revivalists. At the Centennial picnic at North Riverboro, a revivalist sat opposite to Mr. Ladd and Aunt Jane and me, and he was telling about his wonderful success in Bangor last winter. He'd converted a hundred and thirty in a month, he said, or about four and a third a day. I had just finished fractions, so I asked Mr. Ladd how the third of a man could be converted. He laughed and said

it was just the other way; that the man was a third converted. Then he explained that if you were trying to convince a person of his sin on a Monday, and could n't quite finish by sundown, perhaps you would n't want to sit up all night with him, and perhaps he would n't want you to; so you'd begin again on Tuesday, and you could n't say just which day he was converted, because it would be two thirds on Monday and one third on Tuesday."

"Mr. Ladd is always making fun, and the Board could n't expect any great things of us girls, new beginners," suggested Emma Jane, who was being constantly warned against tautology by her teacher. "I think it's awful rude, anyway, to go right out and try to convert your neighbors; but if you borrow a horse and go to Edgewood Lower Corner, or Milliken's Mills, I s'pose that makes it Foreign Missions."

"Would we each go alone or wait upon them with a committee, as they did when they asked Deacon Tuttle for a contribution for the new hearse?" asked Persis.

"Oh! we must go alone," decided Rebecca; "it would be much more refined and delicate. Aunt Miranda says that one man alone could never get a subscription from Deacon Tuttle, and that's the reason they sent a committee. But it seems to me Mrs. Burch could n't mean for us to try and convert people when we're

none of us even church-members, except Candace. I think all we can do is to persuade them to go to meeting and Sabbath-School, or give money for the hearse, or the new horse-sheds. Now let's all think quietly for a minute or two who's the very most heathenish and reperrehensiblest person in Riverboro."

After a very brief period of silence the words "Jacob Moody" fell from all lips with entire accord.

"You are right," said the president tersely; "and after singing hymn number two hundred seventy-four, to be found on the sixty-sixth page, we will take up the question of persuading Mr. Moody to attend divine service or the minister's Bible class, he not having been in the meeting-house for lo! these many years.

> Daughter of Zion, the power that hath saved thee
> Extolled with the harp and the timbrel should be.

Sing without reading, if you please, omitting the second stanza. Hymn two seventy-four, to be found on the sixty-sixth page of the new hymn-book or on page thirty-two of Emma Jane Perkins's old one."

II

It is doubtful if the Reverend Mr. Burch had ever found in Syria a person more difficult to persuade than the already "gospel-hardened" Jacob Moody of Riverboro.

Tall, gaunt, swarthy, black-bearded — his masses of grizzled, uncombed hair and the red scar across his nose and cheek added to his sinister appearance. His tumble-down house stood on a rocky bit of land back of the Sawyer pasture, and the acres of his farm stretched out on all sides of it. He lived alone, ate alone, ploughed, planted, sowed, harvested alone, and was more than willing to die alone, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung." The road that bordered upon his fields was comparatively little used by any one, and notwithstanding the fact that it was thickly set with chokecherry trees and blackberry bushes it had been for years practically deserted by the children. Jacob's Red Astrakhan and Granny Garland trees hung thick with apples, but no Riverboro or Edgewood boy stole them; for terrifying accounts of the fate that had overtaken one urchin in times agone had been handed along from boy to boy, protecting the Moody fruit far better than any police patrol.

Perhaps no circumstances could have extenuated the old man's surly manners or his lack of all citizenly graces and virtues; but his neighbors commonly rebuked his present way of living and forgot the troubled past that had brought it about: the sharp-tongued wife, the unloving and disloyal sons, the daughter's hapless fate, and all the other sorry tricks that

Fortune had played upon him — at least that was the way in which he had always regarded his disappointments and griefs.

This, then, was the personage whose moral rehabilitation was to be accomplished by the Daughters of Zion. But how?

"Who will volunteer to visit Mr. Moody?" blandly asked the president.

Visit Mr. Moody! It was a wonder the roof of the barn chamber did not fall; it did, indeed, echo the words and in some way make them sound more grim and satirical.

"Nobody'll volunteer, Rebecca Rowena Randall, and you know it," said Emma Jane.

"Why don't we draw lots, when none of us wants to speak to him and yet one of us must?"

This suggestion fell from Persis Watson, who had been pale and thoughtful ever since the first mention of Jacob Moody. (She was fond of Granny Garlands; she had once met Jacob; and, as to what befell, well, we all have our secret tragedies!)

"Would n't it be wicked to settle it that way?"

"It's gamblers that draw lots."

"People did it in the Bible ever so often."

"It does n't seem nice for a missionary meeting."

These remarks fell all together upon the president's bewildered ear the while (as she

always said in compositions) — "the while" she was trying to adjust the ethics of this unexpected and difficult dilemma.

"It is a very puzzly question," she said thoughtfully. "I could ask Aunt Jane if we had time, but I suppose we have n't. It does n't seem nice to draw lots, and yet how can we settle it without? We know we mean right, and perhaps it will be. Alice, take this paper and tear off five narrow pieces, all different lengths."

At this moment a voice from a distance floated up to the haymow — a voice saying plaintively: "Will you let me play with you, girls? Huldah has gone to ride, and I 'm all alone."

It was the voice of the absolutely-without-guile Thirza Meserve, and it came at an opportune moment.

"If she is going to be a member," said Persis, "why not let her come up and hold the lots? She 'd be real honest and not favor anybody."

It seemed an excellent idea, and was followed up so quickly that scarcely three minutes ensued before the guileless one was holding the five scraps in her hot little palm, laboriously changing their places again and again until they looked exactly alike and all rather soiled and wilted.

"Come, girls, draw!" commanded the president. "Thirza, you must n't chew gum at a

missionary meeting, it is n't polite nor holy. Take it out and stick it somewhere till the exercises are over."

The five Daughters of Zion approached the spot so charged with fate, and extended their trembling hands one by one. Then after a moment's silent clutch of their papers they drew nearer to one another and compared them.

Emma Jane Perkins had drawn the short one, becoming thus the destined instrument for Jacob Moody's conversion to a more seemly manner of life!

She looked about her despairingly, as if to seek some painless and respectable method of self-destruction.

"Do let's draw over again," she pleaded. "I'm the worst of all of us. I'm sure to make a mess of it till I kind o' get trained in."

Rebecca's heart sank at this frank confession, which only corroborated her own fears.

"I'm sorry, Emmy, dear," she said, "but our only excuse for drawing lots at all would be to have it sacred. We must think of it as a kind of a sign, almost like God speaking to Moses in the burning bush."

"Oh, I *wish* there was a burning bush right here!" cried the distracted and recalcitrant missionary. "How quick I'd step into it without even stopping to take off my garnet ring!"

"We must think of it as a kind of a sign"

P C YOHN

"Don't be such a scare-cat, Emma Jane!" exclaimed Candace bracingly. "Jacob Moody can't kill you, even if he has an awful temper. Trot right along now before you get more frightened. Shall we go 'cross lots with her, Rebecca, and wait at the pasture gate? Then whatever happens Alice can put it down in the minutes of the meeting."

In these terrible crises of life time gallops with such incredible velocity that it seemed to Emma Jane only a breath before she was being dragged through the fields by the other Daughters of Zion, the guileless little Thirza panting in the rear.

At the entrance to the pasture Rebecca gave her an impassioned embrace, and whispering, "*Whatever you do, be careful how you lead up,*" lifted off the top rail and pushed her through the bars. Then the girls turned their backs reluctantly on the pathetic figure, and each sought a tree under whose friendly shade she could watch, and perhaps pray, until the missionary should return from her field of labor.

Alice Robinson, whose compositions were always marked 96 or 97, — 100 symbolizing such perfection as could be attained in the mortal world of Riverboro, — Alice, not only Daughter, but Scribe of Zion, sharpened her pencil and wrote a few well-chosen words of introduction, to be used when the records of

the afternoon had been made by Emma Jane Perkins and Jacob Moody.

Rebecca's heart beat tumultuously under her gingham dress. She felt that a drama was being enacted, and though unfortunately she was not the central figure, she had at least a modest part in it. The short lot had not fallen to the properest Daughter, that she quite realized; yet would any one of them succeed in winning Jacob Moody's attention, in engaging him in pleasant conversation, and finally in bringing him to a realization of his mistaken way of life? She doubted, but at the same moment her spirits rose at the thought of the difficulties involved in the undertaking.

Difficulties always spurred Rebecca on, but they daunted poor Emma Jane, who had no little thrills of excitement and wonder and fear and longing to sustain her lagging soul. That her interview was to be entered as "minutes" by a secretary seemed to her the last straw. Her blue eyes looked lighter than usual and had the glaze of china saucers; her usually pink cheeks were pale, but she pressed on, determined to be a faithful Daughter of Zion, and above all to be worthy of Rebecca's admiration and respect.

"Rebecca can do anything," she thought, with enthusiastic loyalty, "and I must n't be any stupider than I can help, or she'll choose

one of the other girls for her most intimate friend." So, mustering all her courage, she turned into Jacob Moody's dooryard, where he was chopping wood.

"It's a pleasant afternoon, Mr. Moody," she said in a polite but hoarse whisper, Rebecca's words, "*Lead up! Lead up!*" ringing in clarion tones through her brain.

Jacob Moody looked at her curiously. "Good enough, I guess," he growled; "but I don't never have time to look at afternoons."

Emma Jane seated herself timorously on the end of a large log near the chopping-block, supposing that Jacob, like other hosts, would pause in his tasks and chat.

"The block is kind of like an idol," she thought; "I wish I could take it away from him, and then perhaps he'd talk."

At this moment Jacob raised his axe and came down on the block with such a stunning blow that Emma Jane fairly leaped into the air.

"You'd better look out, Sissy, or you'll git chips in the eye!" said Moody, grimly going on with his work.

The Daughter of Zion sent up a silent prayer for inspiration, but none came, and she sat silent, giving nervous jumps in spite of herself whenever the axe fell upon the log Jacob was cutting.

Finally, the host became tired of his dumb visitor, and leaning on his axe he said, "Look here, Sis, what have you come for? What's your errant? Do you want apples? or cider? or what? Speak out, or *git* out, one or t' other."

Emma Jane, who had wrung her handkerchief into a clammy ball, gave it a last despairing wrench, and faltered: "Would n't you like — had n't you better — don't you think you'd ought to be more constant at meeting and Sabbath-School?"

Jacob's axe almost dropped from his nerveless hand, and he regarded the Daughter of Zion with unspeakable rage and disdain. Then, the blood mounting in his face, he gathered himself together, and shouted: "You take yourself off that log and out o' this dooryard double-quick, you imperdent sanct'omus young one! You just let me ketch Bill Perkins's child trying to teach me where I shall go, at my age! Scuttle, I tell ye! And if I see your pious cantin' little mug inside my fence ag'in on sech a business I'll chase ye down the hill or set the dog on ye! *Scoot, I tell ye!*"

Emma Jane obeyed orders summarily, taking herself off the log, out the dooryard, and otherwise scuttling and scooting down the hill at a pace never contemplated even by Jacob Moody, who stood regarding her flying heels with a sardonic grin.

Down she stumbled, the tears coursing over her cheeks and mingling with the dust of her flight; blighted hope, shame, fear, rage, all tearing her bosom in turn, till with a hysterical shriek she fell over the bars and into Rebecca's arms outstretched to receive her. The other Daughters wiped her eyes and supported her almost fainting form, while Thirza, thoroughly frightened, burst into sympathetic tears, and refused to be comforted.

No questions were asked, for it was felt by all parties that Emma Jane's demeanor was answering them before they could be framed.

"He threatened to set the dog on me!" she wailed presently, when, as they neared the Sawyer pasture, she was able to control her voice. "He called me a pious, cantin' young one, and said he'd chase me out o' the dooryard if I ever came again! And he'll tell my father — I know he will, for he hates him like poison."

All at once the adult point of view dawned upon Rebecca. She never saw it until it was too obvious to be ignored. Had they done wrong in interviewing Jacob Moody? Would Aunt Miranda be angry, as well as Mr. Perkins?

"Why was he so dreadful, Emmy?" she questioned tenderly. "What did you say first? How did you lead up to it?"

Emma Jane sobbed more convulsively, and

wiped her nose and eyes impartially as she tried to think.

"I guess I never led up at all; not a mite. I did n't know what you meant. I was sent on an errant, and I went and done it the best I could! (Emma Jane's grammar always lapsed in moments of excitement.) And then Jake roared at me like Squire Winship's bull. . . . And he called my face a mug. . . . You shut up that secretary book, Alice Robinson! If you write down a single word I 'll never speak to you again. . . . And I don't want to be a 'member' another minute for fear of drawing another short lot. I 've got enough of the Daughters of Zion to last me the rest o' my life! I don't care who goes to meetin' and who don't."

The girls were at the Perkins's gate by this time, and Emma Jane went sadly into the empty house to remove all traces of the tragedy from her person before her mother should come home from the church.

The others wended their way slowly down the street, feeling that their promising missionary branch had died almost as soon as it had budded.

"Good-bye," said Rebecca, swallowing lumps of disappointment and chagrin as she saw the whole inspiring plan break and vanish into thin air like an iridescent bubble. "It's all over and we won't ever try it again. I 'm going in to do

overcasting as hard as I can, because I hate that the worst. Aunt Jane must write to Mrs. Burch that we don't want to be home missionaries. Perhaps we're not big enough, anyway. I'm perfectly certain it's nicer to convert people when they're yellow or brown or any color but white; and I believe it must be easier to save their souls than it is to make them go to meeting."

THIRD CHRONICLE

REBECCA'S THOUGHT BOOK

I

THE "Sawyer girls'" barn still had its haymow in Rebecca's time, although the hay was a dozen years old or more, and, in the opinion of the occasional visiting horse, sadly juiceless and wanting in flavor. It still sheltered, too, old Deacon Israel Sawyer's carryall and mowing-machine, with his pung, his sleigh, and a dozen other survivals of an earlier era, when the broad acres of the brick house went to make one of the finest farms in Riverboro.

There were no horses or cows in the stalls nowadays; no pig grunting comfortably of future spare ribs in the sty; no hens to peck the plants in the cherished garden patch. The Sawyer girls were getting on in years, and, mindful that care once killed a cat, they ordered their lives with the view of escaping that particular doom, at least, and succeeded fairly well until Rebecca's advent made existence a trifle more sensational.

Once a month for years upon years, Miss Miranda and Miss Jane had put towels over

their heads and made a solemn visit to the barn, taking off the enameled cloth coverings (occasionally called "emmanuel covers" in Riverboro), dusting the ancient implements, and sometimes sweeping the heaviest of the cobwebs from the corners, or giving a brush to the floor.

Deacon Israel's tottering ladder still stood in its accustomed place, propped against the haymow, and the heavenly stairway leading to eternal glory scarcely looked fairer to Jacob of old than this to Rebecca. By means of its dusty rounds she mounted, mounted, mounted far away from time and care and maiden aunts, far away from childish tasks and childish troubles, to the barn chamber, a place so full of golden dreams, happy reveries, and vague longings, that, as her little brown hands clung to the sides of the ladder and her feet trod the rounds cautiously in her ascent, her heart almost stopped beating in the sheer joy of anticipation.

Once having gained the heights, the next thing was to unlatch the heavy doors and give them a gentle swing outward. Then, oh, ever new Paradise! then, oh, ever lovely green and growing world! for Rebecca had that something in her soul that

> Gives to seas and sunset skies
> The unspent beauty of surprise.

At the top of Guide Board hill she could see Alice Robinson's barn with its shining weather-vane, a huge burnished fish that swam with the wind and foretold the day to all Riverboro. The meadow, with its sunny slopes stretching up to the pine woods, was sometimes a flowing sheet of shimmering grass, sometimes — when daisies and buttercups were blooming — a vision of white and gold. Sometimes the shorn stubble would be dotted with "the happy hills of hay," and a little later the rock maple on the edge of the pines would stand out like a golden ball against the green; its neighbor, the sugar maple, glowing beside it, brave in scarlet.

It was on one of these autumn days with a wintry nip in the air that Adam Ladd (Rebecca's favorite "Mr. Aladdin"), after searching for her in field and garden, suddenly noticed the open doors of the barn chamber, and called to her. At the sound of his voice she dropped her precious diary, and flew to the edge of the haymow. He never forgot the vision of the startled little poetess, book in one mittened hand, pencil in the other, dark hair all ruffled, with the picturesque addition of an occasional blade of straw, her cheeks crimson, her eyes shining.

"A Sappho in mittens!" he cried laughingly, and at her eager question told her to look up the unknown lady in the school encyclopædia,

when she was admitted to the Female Seminary at Wareham.

Now, all being ready, Rebecca went to a corner of the haymow, and withdrew a thick blank-book with mottled covers. Out of her gingham apron pocket came a pencil, a bit of rubber, and some pieces of brown paper; then she seated herself gravely on the floor, and drew an inverted soap-box nearer to her for a table.

The book was reverently opened, and there was a serious reading of the extracts already carefully copied therein. Most of them were apparently to the writer's liking, for dimples of pleasure showed themselves now and then, and smiles of obvious delight played about her face; but once in a while there was a knitting of the brows and a sigh of discouragement, showing that the artist in the child was not wholly satisfied.

Then came the crucial moment when the budding author was supposedly to be racked with the throes of composition; but seemingly there were no throes. Other girls could wield the darning or crochet or knitting needle, and send the tatting-shuttle through loops of the finest cotton; hemstitch, oversew, braid hair in thirteen strands, but the pencil was never obedient in their fingers, and the pen and ink-pot were a horror from early childhood to the end of time.

Not so with Rebecca; her pencil moved as easily as her tongue, and no more striking simile could possibly be used. Her handwriting was not Spencerian; she had neither time, nor patience, it is to be feared, for copybook methods, and her unformed characters were frequently the despair of her teachers; but write she could, write she would, write she must and did, in season and out; from the time she made pothooks at six, till now, writing was the easiest of all possible tasks; to be indulged in as solace and balm when the terrors of examples in least common multiple threatened to dethrone the reason, or the rules of grammar loomed huge and unconquerable in the near horizon.

As to spelling, it came to her in the main by free grace, and not by training, and though she slipped at times from the beaten path, her extraordinary ear and good visual memory kept her from many or flagrant mistakes. It was her intention, especially when saying her prayers at night, to look up all doubtful words in her small dictionary, before copying her Thoughts into the sacred book for the inspiration of posterity; but when genius burned with a brilliant flame, and particularly when she was in the barn and the dictionary in the house, impulse as usual carried the day.

There sits Rebecca, then, in the open door of the Sawyer's barn chamber — the sunset door.

How many a time had her grandfather, the good deacon, sat just underneath in his tipped-back chair, when Mrs. Israel's temper was uncertain, and the serenity of the barn was in comforting contrast to his own fireside!

The open doors swinging out to the peaceful landscape, the solace of the pipe, not allowed in the "settin'-room" — how beautifully these simple agents have ministered to the family peace in days agone! "If I had n't had my barn and my store *both*, I could n't never have lived in holy matrimony with Maryliza!" once said Mr. Watson feelingly.

But the deacon, looking on his waving grass fields, his tasseling corn and his timber lands, bright and honest as were his eyes, never saw such visions as Rebecca. The child, transplanted from her home-farm at Sunnybrook, from the care of the overworked but easy-going mother, and the companionship of the scantily fed, scantily clothed, happy-go-lucky brothers and sisters — she had indeed fallen on shady days in Riverboro. The blinds were closed in every room of the house but two, and the same might have been said of Miss Miranda's mind and heart, though Miss Jane had a few windows opening to the sun, and Rebecca already had her unconscious hand on several others. Brick-house rules were rigid and many for a little creature so full of life, but Rebecca's gay

spirit could not be pinioned in a strait-jacket for long at a time; it escaped somehow and winged its merry way into the sunshine and free air; if she were not allowed to sing in the orchard, like the wild bird she was, she could still sing in the cage, like the canary.

II

If you had opened the carefully guarded volume with the mottled covers, you would first have seen a wonderful title-page, constructed apparently on the same lines as an obituary, or the inscription on a tombstone, save for the quantity and variety of information contained in it. Much of the matter would seem to the captious critic better adapted to the body of the book than to the title-page, but Rebecca was apparently anxious that the principal personages in her chronicle should be well described at the outset.

She seems to have had a conviction that heredity plays its part in the evolution of genius, and her belief that the world will be inspired by the possession of her Thoughts is too artless to be offensive. She evidently has respect for rich material confided to her teacher, and one can imagine Miss Dearborn's woe had she been confronted by Rebecca's chosen literary executor and bidden to deliver certain "Valuable Poetry and Thoughts," the property of posterity "unless carelessly destroyed."

THOUGHT BOOK

of

REBECCA ROWENA RANDALL

Really of
Sunnybrook Farm
But Temporily of
The Brick House Riverboro.
Own niece of Miss Miranda and Jane Sawyer
Second of seven children of her father Mr. L. D. M. Randall
(Now at rest in Temperance cemmetary and there will be a
monument as soon as we pay off the morgage on the farm)
Also of her mother Mrs. Aurelia Randall

In case of Death the best of these Thoughts
May be printed in my Remerniscences
For the Sunday School Library at Temperance, Maine
Which needs more books fearfully
And I hereby Will and Testament them
To Mr. Adam Ladd
Who bought 300 cakes of soap from me
And thus secured a premium
A Greatly Needed Banquet Lamp
For my friends the Simpsons.
He is the only one that incourages
My writing Remerniscences and
My teacher Miss Dearborn will
Have much Valuable Poetry and Thoughts
To give him unless carelessly destroyed.

The pictures are by the same hand that
Wrote the Thoughts.

It is not now decided whether Rebecca Rowena Randall will be a painter or an author, but after her death it will be known which she has been, if any.

FINIS

From the title-page, with its wealth of detail, and its unnecessary and irrelevant information, the book ripples on like a brook, and to the weary reader of problem novels it may have something of the brook's refreshing quality.

OUR DIARIES

May, 187–.

All the girls are keeping a diary because Miss Dearborn was very much ashamed when the school trustees told her that most of the girls' and all of the boys' compositions were disgraceful, and must be improved upon next term. She asked the boys to write letters to her once a week instead of keeping a diary, which they thought was girlish like playing with dolls. The boys thought it was dreadful to have to write letters every seven days, but she told them it was not half as bad for them as it was for her who had to read them.

To make my diary a little different I am going to call it a Thought Book (written just like that, with capitals). I have thoughts that I never can use unless I write them down, for Aunt Miranda always says, Keep your thoughts to yourself. Aunt Jane lets me tell her some, but does not like my queer ones and my true thoughts are mostly queer. Emma Jane does not mind hearing them now and then, and that is my only chance.

If Miss Dearborn does not like the name Thought Book I will call it Remerniscences (written just like that with a capital R). Remerniscences are things you remember about yourself and write down in case you should die. Aunt Jane does n't like to read any other kind of books but just lives of in-

teresting dead people and she says that is what Longfellow (who was born in the state of Maine and we should be very proud of it and try to write like him) meant in his poem: —

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We should make our lives sublime,
> And departing, leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time.

I know what this means because when Emma Jane and I went to the beach with Uncle Jerry Cobb we ran along the wet sand and looked at the shapes our boots made, just as if they were stamped in wax. Emma Jane turns in her left foot (splay-foot the boys call it, which is not polite) and Seth Strout had just patched one of my shoes and it all came out in the sand pictures. When I learned The Psalm of Life for Friday afternoon speaking I thought I should n't like to leave a patched footprint, nor have Emma Jane's look crooked on the sands of time, and right away I thought Oh! what a splendid thought for my Thought Book when Aunt Jane buys me a fifteen-cent one over to Watson's store.

. . . . . .

REMERNISCENCES

June, 187–.

I told Aunt Jane I was going to begin my Remerniscences, and she says I am full young, but I reminded her that Candace Milliken's sister died when she was ten, leaving no footprints whatever, and if I should die suddenly who would write down my Remerniscences? Aunt Miranda says the sun and moon would rise and set just the same, and it

was no matter if they did n't get written down, and to go up attic and find her piece-bag; but I said it would, as there was only one of everybody in the world, and nobody else could do their remerniscensing for them. If I should die to-night I know not who would describe me right. Miss Dearborn would say one thing and brother John another. Emma Jane would try to do me justice, but has no words; and I am glad Aunt Miranda never takes the pen in hand.

My dictionary is so small it has not many genteel words in it, and I cannot find how to spell Remerniscences, but I remember from the cover of Aunt Jane's book that there was an "s" and a "c" close together in the middle of it, which I thought foolish and not needful.

All the girls like their diaries very much, but Minnie Smellie got Alice Robinson's where she had hid it under the school wood-pile and read it all through. She said it was no worse than reading anybody's composition, but we told her it was just like peeking through a keyhole, or listening at a window, or opening a bureau drawer. She said she did n't look at it that way, and I told her that unless her eyes got unscealed she would never leave any kind of a sublime footprint on the sands of time. I told her a diary was very sacred as you generally poured your deepest feelings into it expecting nobody to look at it but yourself and your indulgent heavenly Father who seeeth all things.

Of course it would not hurt Persis Watson to show her diary because she has not a sacred plan and this is the way it goes, for she reads it out loud to us: —

"Arose at six this morning — (you always arise

in a diary but you say get up when you talk about it). Ate breakfast at half-past six. Had soda biscuits, coffee, fish hash and doughnuts. Wiped the dishes, fed the hens and made my bed before school. Had a good arithmetic lesson, but went down two in spelling. At half-past four played hide and coop in the Sawyer pasture. Fed hens and went to bed at eight."

She says she can't put in what does n't happen, but as I don't think her diary is interesting she will ask her mother to have meat hash instead of fish, with pie when the doughnuts give out, and she will feed the hens before breakfast to make a change. We are all going now to try and make something happen every single day so the diaries won't be so dull and the footprints so common.

. . . . . .

AN UNCOMMON THOUGHT

July, 187–.

We dug up our rosecakes to-day, and that gave me a good Remerniscence. The way you make rosecakes is, you take the leaves of full blown roses and mix them with a little cinnamon and as much brown sugar as they will give you, which is never half enough except Persis Watson, whose affectionate parents let her go to the barrel in their store. Then you do up little bits like sedlitz powders, first in soft paper and then in brown, and bury them in the ground and let them stay as long as you possibly can hold out; then dig them up and eat them. Emma Jane and I stick up little signs over the holes in the ground with the date we buried them and when they'll be done enough to dig up, but we can never wait. When Aunt Jane

saw us she said it was the first thing for children to learn, — not to be impatient, — so when I went to the barn chamber I made a poem.

IMPATIENCE

We dug our rose cakes up oh! all too soon.
'T was in the orchard just at noon.
'T was in a bright July forenoon.
'T was in the sunny afternoon.
'T was underneath the harvest moon.

It was not that way at all; it was a foggy morning before school, and I should think poets could never possibly get to heaven, for it is so hard to stick to the truth when you are writing poetry. Emma Jane thinks it is nobody's business when we dug the rosecakes up. I like the line about the harvest moon best, but it would give a wrong idea of our lives and characters to the people that read my Thoughts, for they would think we were up late nights, so I have fixed it like this: —

IMPATIENCE

We dug our rose cakes up oh! all too soon,
We thought their sweetness would be such a boon.
We ne'er suspicioned they would not be done
After three days of autumn wind and sun.
Why did we from the earth our treasures draw?
'T was not for fear that rat or mole might naw,
An aged aunt doth say impatience was the reason,
She says that youth is ever out of season.

That is just as Aunt Jane said it, and it gave me the thought for the poem which is rather uncommon.

. . . . . .

A DREADFUL QUESTION

September, 187–.

Which has been the most Benefercent Influence on Character — Punishment or Reward?

This truly dreadful question was given us by Dr. Moses when he visited school to-day. He is a School Committee; not a whole one but I do not know the singular number of him. He told us we could ask our families what they thought, though he would rather we would n't, but we must write our own words and he would hear them next week.

After he went out and shut the door the scholars were all plunged in gloom and you could have heard a pin drop. Alice Robinson cried and borrowed my handkerchief, and the boys looked as if the schoolhouse had been struck by lightning. The worst of all was poor Miss Dearborn, who will lose her place if she does not make us better scholars soon, for Dr. Moses has a daughter all ready to put right in to the school and she can board at home and save all her wages. Libby Moses is her name.

Miss Dearborn stared out the window, and her mouth and chin shook like Alice Robinson's, for she knew, ah! all too well, what the coming week would bring forth.

Then I raised my hand for permission to speak, and stood up and said: "Miss Dearborn, don't you mind! Just explain to us what 'benefercent' means and we'll write something real interesting; for all of us know what punishment is, and have seen others get rewards, and it is not so bad a subject as some." And Dick Carter whispered, "*Good on your head, Rebecca!*" which meant he was sorry for her too, and would try his best, but has no words.

Then teacher smiled and said benefercent meant good or healthy for anybody, and would all rise who thought punishment made the best scholars and men and women; and everybody sat stock still.

And then she asked all to stand who believed that rewards produced the finest results, and there was a mighty sound like unto the rushing of waters, but really was our feet scraping the floor, and the scholars stood up, and it looked like an army, though it was only nineteen, because of the strong belief that was in them. Then Miss Dearborn laughed and said she was thankful for every whipping she had when she was a child, and Living Perkins said perhaps we had n't got to the thankful age, or perhaps her father had n't used a strap, and she said oh! no, it was her mother with the open hand; and Dick Carter said he would n't call that punishment, and Sam Simpson said so too.

I am going to write about the subject in my Thought Book first, and when I make it into a composition, I can leave out anything about the family or not genteel, as there is much to relate about punishment not pleasant or nice and hardly polite.

. . . . . .

PUNISHMENT

Punishment is a very puzzly thing, but I believe in it when really deserved, only when I punish myself it does not always turn out well. When I leaned over the new bridge, and got my dress all paint, and Aunt Sarah Cobb could n't get it out, I had to wear it spotted for six months which hurt my pride, but was right. I stayed at home from Alice Robinson's birthday party for a punishment, and went to the circus next day instead, but Alice's parties are

very cold and stiff, as Mrs. Robinson makes the boys stand on newspapers if they come inside the door, and the blinds are always shut, and Mrs. Robinson tells me how bad her liver complaint is this year. So I thought, to pay for the circus and a few other things I ought to get more punishment, and I threw my pink parasol down the well, as the mothers in the missionary books throw their infants to the crocodiles in the Ganges river. But it got stuck in the chain that holds the bucket, and Aunt Miranda had to get Abijah Flagg to take out all the broken bits before we could bring up water.

I punished myself this way because Aunt Miranda said that unless I improved I would be nothing but a Burden and a Blight.

There was an old man used to go by our farm carrying a lot of broken chairs to bottom, and mother used to say — "Poor man! his back is too weak for such a burden!" and I used to take him out a doughnut, and this is the part I want to go into the Remerniscences. Once I told him we were sorry the chairs were so heavy, and he said *they did n't seem so heavy when he had et the doughnut.* This does not mean that the doughnut was heavier than the chairs which is what brother John said, but it is a beautiful thought and shows how the human race should have sympathy, and help bear burdens.

I know about a Blight, for there was a dreadful east wind over at our farm that destroyed all the little young crops just out of the ground, and the farmers called it the Blight. And I would rather be hail, sleet, frost, or snow than a Blight, which is mean and secret, and which is the reason I threw away the dearest thing on earth to me, the pink parasol that Miss Ross brought me from Paris,

France. I have also wrapped up my bead purse in three papers and put it away marked not to be opened till after my death unless needed for a party.

I must not be Burden, I must not be Blight,
The angels in heaven would weep at the sight.

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REWARDS

A good way to find out which has the most benefercent effect would be to try rewards on myself this next week and write my composition the very last day, when I see how my character is. It is hard to find rewards for yourself, but perhaps Aunt Jane and some of the girls would each give me one to help out. I could carry my bead purse to school every day, or wear my coral chain a little while before I go to sleep at night. I could read Cora or the Sorrows of a Doctor's Wife a little oftener, but that's all the rewards I can think of. I fear Aunt Miranda would say they are wicked but oh! if they should turn out benefercent how glad and joyful life would be to me! A sweet and beautiful character, beloved by my teacher and schoolmates, admired and petted by my aunts and neighbors, yet carrying my bead purse constantly, with perhaps my best hat on Wednesday afternoons, as well as Sundays!

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A GREAT SHOCK

The reason why Alice Robinson could not play was, she was being punished for breaking her mother's blue platter. Just before supper my story being finished I went up Guide Board hill to see

how she was bearing up and she spoke to me from her window. She said she did not mind being punished because she had n't been for a long time, and she hoped it would help her with her composition. She thought it would give her thoughts, and tomorrow's the last day for her to have any. This gave me a good idea and I told her to call her father up and beg him to beat her violently. It would hurt, I said, but perhaps none of the other girls would have a punishment like that, and her composition would be all different and splendid. I would borrow Aunt Miranda's witchhayzel and pour it on her wounds like the Sumaritan in the Bible.

I went up again after supper with Dick Carter to see how it turned out. Alice came to the window and Dick threw up a note tied to a stick. I had written: "*Demand your punishment to the full. Be brave like Dolores' mother in the* Martyrs of Spain."

She threw down an answer, and it was: "*You just be like Dolores' mother yourself if you're so smart!*" Then she stamped away from the window and my feelings were hurt, but Dick said perhaps she was hungry, and that made her cross. And as Dick and I turned to go out of the yard we looked back and I saw something I can never forget. (The Great Shock) Mrs. Robinson was out behind the barn feeding the turkies. Mr. Robinson came softly out of the side door in the orcherd and looking everywheres around he stepped to the wire closet and took out a saucer of cold beans with a pickled beet on top, and a big piece of blueberry pie. Then he crept up the back stairs and we could see Alice open her door and take in the supper.

Oh! what will become of her composition, and

how can she tell anything of the benefercent effects of punishment, when she is locked up by one parent, and fed by the other? I have forgiven her for the way she snapped me up for, of course, you could n't beg your father to beat you when he was bringing you blueberry pie. Mrs. Robinson makes a kind that leaks out a thick purple juice into the plate and needs a spoon and blacks your mouth, but is heavenly.

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A DREAM

The week is almost up and very soon Dr. Moses will drive up to the school house like Elijah in the chariot and come in to hear us read. There is a good deal of sickness among us. Some of the boys are not able to come to school just now, but hope to be about again by Monday, when Dr. Moses goes away to a convention. It is a very hard composition to write, somehow. Last night I dreamed that the river was ink and I kept dipping into it and writing with a penstalk made of a young pine tree. I sliced great slabs of marble off the side of one of the White Mountains, the one you see when going to meeting, and wrote on those. Then I threw them all into the falls, not being good enough for Dr. Moses.

Dick Carter had a splendid boy to stay over Sunday. He makes the real newspaper named The Pilot published by the boys at Wareham Academy. He says when he talks about himself in writing he calls himself "we," and it sounds much more like print, besides conscealing him more.

Example: Our hair was measured this morning and has grown two inches since last time. . . . We

have a loose tooth that troubles us very much. . . . Our inkspot that we made by negligence on our only white petticoat we have been able to remove with lemon and milk. Some of our petticoat came out with the spot.

I shall try it in my composition sometime, for of course I shall write for the Pilot when I go to Wareham Seminary. Uncle Jerry Cobb says that I shall, and thinks that in four years I might rise to be editor if they ever have girls.

I have never been more good than since I have been rewarding myself steady, even to asking Aunt Miranda kindly to offer me a company jelly-tart, not because I was hungry, but for an experement I was trying, and would explain to her sometime.

She said she never thought it was wise to experement with your stomach, and I said, with a queer thrilling look, it was not my stomach but my soul, that was being tried. Then she gave me the tart and walked away all puzzled and nervous.

The new minister has asked me to come and see him any Saturday afternoon as he writes poetry himself, but I would rather not ask him about this composition.

Ministers never believe in rewards, and it is useless to hope that they will. We had the wrath of God four times in sermons this last summer, but God cannot be angry all the time, — nobody could, especially in summer; Mr. Baxter is different and calls his wife dear which is lovely and the first time I ever heard it in Riverboro. Mrs. Baxter is another kind of people too, from those that live in Temperance. I like to watch her in meeting and see her listen to her husband who is young and handsome for a minister; it gives me very queer and uncom-

mon feelings, when they look at each other, which they always do when not otherwise engaged.

She has different clothes from anybody else. Aunt Miranda says you must think only of two things: will your dress keep you warm and will it wear well and there is nobody in the world to know how I love pink and red and how I hate drab and green and how I never wear my hat with the black and yellow porkupine quills without wishing it would blow into the river.

Whene'er I take my walks abroad
How many quills I see.
But as they are not porkupines
They never come to me.

COMPOSITION

Which has the most Benefercent Effect on the Character, Punishment or Reward?

by

Rebecca Rowena Randall.

(This copy not corrected by Miss Dearborn yet.)

We find ourselves very puzzled in approaching this truly great and national question though we have tried very ernestly to understand it, so as to show how wisely and wonderfully our dear teacher guides the youthful mind, it being her wish that our composition class shall long be remembered in Riverboro Center.

We would say first of all that punishment seems more benefercently needed by boys than girls. Boys' sins are very violent, like stealing fruit, profane language, playing truant, fighting, breaking windows, and killing innocent little flies and bugs.

If these were not taken out of them early in life it would be impossible for them to become like our martyred president, Abraham Lincoln.

Although we have asked everybody on our street, they think boys' sins can only be whipped out of them with a switch or strap, which makes us feel very sad, as boys when not sinning the dreadful sins mentioned above seem just as good as girls, and never cry when switched, and say it does not hurt much.

We now approach girls, which we know better, being one. Girls seem better than boys because their sins are not so noisy and showy. They can disobey their parents and aunts, whisper in silent hour, cheat in lessons, say angry things to their schoolmates, tell lies, be sulky and lazy, but all these can be conducted quite ladylike and genteel, and nobody wants to strap girls because their skins are tender and get black and blue very easily.

Punishments make one very unhappy and rewards very happy, and one would think when one is happy one would behave the best. We were acquainted with a girl who gave herself rewards every day for a week, and it seemed to make her as lovely a character as one could wish; but perhaps if one went on for years giving rewards to onesself one would become selfish. One cannot tell, one can only fear.

If a dog kills a sheep we should whip him straight away, and on the very spot where he can see the sheep, or he will not know what we mean, and may forget and kill another. The same is true of the human race. We must be firm and patient in punishing, no matter how much we love the one who has done wrong, and how hungry she is. It does no good to whip a person with one hand and offer her a

pickled beet with the other. This confuses her mind, and she may grow up not knowing right from wrong.[1]

We now respectfully approach the Holy Bible and the people in the Bible were punished the whole time, and that would seem to make it right. Everybody says Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; but we think ourself, that the Lord is a better punisher than we are, and knows better how and when to do it having attended to it ever since the year B.C. while the human race could not know about it till 1492 A.D., which is when Columbus discovered America.

We do not believe we can find out all about this truly great and national subject till we get to heaven, where the human race, strapped and unstrapped, if any, can meet together and laying down their harps discuss how they got there.

And we would gently advise boys to be more quiet and genteel in conduct and try rewards to see how they would work. Rewards are not all like the little rosebud merit-cards we receive on Fridays, and which boys sometimes tear up and fling scornfully to the breeze when they get outside, but girls preserve carefully in an envelope.

Some rewards are great and glorious, for boys can get to be governor or school trustee or road commissioner or president, while girls can only be wife and mother. But all of us can have the ornament of a meek and lowly spirit, especially girls, who have more use for it than boys.

R. R. R.

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[1] The striking example of the pickled beet was removed from the essay by the refined but ruthless Miss Dearborn, who strove patiently, but vainly, to keep such vulgar images out of her pupils' literary efforts.

STORIES AND PEOPLE

October, 187–.

There are people in books and people in Riverboro, and they are not the same kind. They never talk of chargers and palfreys in the village, nor say How oft and Methinks, and if a Scotchman out of Rob Roy should come to Riverboro and want to marry one of us girls we could not understand him unless he made motions; though Huldah Meserve says if a nobleman of high degree should ask her to be his, — one of vast estates with serfs at his bidding, — she would be able to guess his meaning in any language.

Uncle Jerry Cobb thinks that Riverboro people would not make a story, but I know that some of them would.

Jack-o'-Lantern, though only a baby, was just like a real story if anybody had written a piece about him: How his mother was dead and his father ran away and Emma Jane and I got Aunt Sarah Cobb to keep him so Mr. Perkins would n't take him to the poor-farm; and about our lovely times with him that summer, and our dreadful loss when his father remembered him in the fall and came to take him away; and how Aunt Sarah carried the trundle bed up attic again and Emma Jane and I heard her crying and stole away.

Mrs. Peter Meserve says Grandpa Sawyer was a wonderful hand at stories before his spirit was broken by grandmother. She says he was the life of the store and tavern when he was a young man, though generally sober, and she thinks I take after him, because I like compositions better than all the other lessons; but mother says I take after father,

who always could say everything nicely whether he had anything to say or not; so methinks I should be grateful to both of them. They are what is called ancestors and much depends upon whether you have them or not. The Simpsons have not any at all. Aunt Miranda says the reason everybody is so prosperous around here is because their ancestors were all first settlers and raised on burnt ground. This should make us very proud.

Methinks and methought are splendid words for compositions. Miss Dearborn likes them very much, but Alice and I never bring them in to suit her. Methought means the same as I thought, but sounds better. Example: If you are telling a dream you had about your aged aunt: —

> Methought I heard her say
> My child you have so useful been
> You need not sew to-day.

This is a good example one way, but too unlikely, woe is me!

This afternoon I was walking over to the store to buy molasses, and as I came off the bridge and turned up the hill, I saw lots and lots of heelprints in the side of the road, — heelprints with little spike-holes in them.

"Oh! the river drivers have come from up country," I thought, "and they'll be breaking the jam at our falls to-morrow." I looked everywhere about and not a man did I see, but still I knew I was not mistaken for the heelprints could not lie. All the way over and back I thought about it, though unfortunately forgetting the molasses, and Alice Robinson not being able to come out, I took playtime to write a story. It is the first grown-up one I ever

did, and is intended to be like Cora the Doctor's Wife, not like a school composition. It is written for Mr. Adam Ladd, and people like him who live in Boston, and is the printed kind you get money for, to pay off a morgage.

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LANCELOT OR THE PARTED LOVERS

A beautiful village maiden was betrothed to a stallwart river driver, but they had high and bitter words and parted, he to weep into the crystal stream as he drove his logs, and she to sigh and moan as she went about her round of household tasks.

At eventide the maiden was wont to lean over the bridge and her tears also fell into the foaming stream; so, though the two unhappy lovers did not know it, the river was their friend, the only one to whom they told their secrets and wept into.

The months crept on and it was the next July when the maiden was passing over the bridge and up the hill. Suddenly she spied footprints on the sands of time.

"The river drivers have come again!" she cried, putting her hand to her side for she had a slight heart trouble like Cora and Mrs. Peter Meserve, that does n't kill.

"They *have* come indeed; *especially one you know*," said a voice, and out from the alder bushes sprung Lancelot Littlefield, for that was the lover's name and it was none other than he. His hair was curly and like living gold. His shirt, while of flannel, was new and dry, and of a handsome color, and as the maiden looked at him she could think of nought but a fairy prince.

"Forgive," she mermered, stretching out her waisted hands.

"Nay, sweet," he replied. "'T is I should say that to you," and bending gracefully on one knee he kissed the hem of her dress. It was a rich pink gingham check, ellaborately ornamented with white tape trimming.

Clasping each other to the heart like Cora and the Doctor, they stood there for a long while, till they heard the rumble of wheels on the bridge and knew they must disentangle.

The wheels came nearer and verily! it was the maiden's father.

"Can I wed with your fair daughter this very moon," asked Lancelot, who will not be called his whole name again in this story.

"You may," said the father, "for lo! she has been ready and waiting for many months." This he said not noting how he was shaming the maiden, whose name was Linda Rowenetta.

Then and there the nuptial day was appointed and when it came, the marriage knot was tied upon the river bank where first they met; the river bank where they had parted in anger, and where they had again scealed their vows and clasped each other to the heart. And it was very low water that summer, and the river always thought it was because no tears dropped into it but so many smiles that like sunshine they dried it up.

R. R. R.

Finis.

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CAREERS

November, 187–.

Long ago when I used to watch Miss Ross painting the old mill at Sunnybrook I thought I would be a painter, for Miss Ross went to Paris France where she bought my bead purse and pink parasol and I thought I would like to see a street with beautiful bright-colored things sparkling and hanging in the store windows.

Then when the missionaries from Syria came to stay at the brick house Mrs. Burch said that after I had experienced religion I must learn music and train my voice and go out to heathen lands and save souls, so I thought that would be my career. But we girls tried to have a branch and be home missionaries and it did not work well. Emma Jane's father would not let her have her birthday party when he found out what she had done and Aunt Jane sent me up to Jake Moody's to tell him we did not mean to be rude when we asked him to go to meeting more often. He said all right, but just let him catch that little dough-faced Perkins young one in his yard once more and she'd have reason to remember the call, which was just as rude and impolite as our trying to lead him to a purer and a better life.

Then Uncle Jerry and Mr. Aladdin and Miss Dearborn liked my compositions, and I thought I'd better be a writer, for I must be something the minute I'm seventeen, or how shall we ever get the morgage off the farm? But even that hope is taken away from me now, for Uncle Jerry made fun of my story Lancelot Or The Parted Lovers and I have decided to be a teacher like Miss Dearborn.

The pathetic announcement of a change in the career and life purposes of Rebecca was brought about by her reading the grown-up story to Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Cobb after supper in the orchard. Uncle Jerry was the person who had maintained all along that Riverboro people would not make a story; and "Lancelot; or, The Parted Lovers," was intended to refute that assertion at once and forever; an assertion which Rebecca regarded (quite truly) as untenable, though why she certainly never could have explained. Unfortunately Lancelot was a poor missionary, quite unfitted for the high achievements to which he was destined by the youthful novelist, and Uncle Jerry, though a stage-driver and no reading man, at once perceived the flabbiness and transparency of the Parted Lovers the moment they were held up to his inspection.

"You see Riverboro people *will* make a story!" asserted Rebecca triumphantly as she finished her reading and folded the paper. "And it all came from my noticing the river drivers' tracks by the roadside, and wondering about them; and wondering always makes stories; the minister says so."

"Ye-es," allowed Uncle Jerry reflectively, tipping his chair back against the apple tree and forcing his slow mind to violent and instantaneous action, for Rebecca was his pride and

joy; a person, in his opinion, of superhuman talent, one therefore to be "whittled into shape" if occasion demanded.

"It's a Riverboro story, sure enough, because you've got the river and the bridge and the hill and the drivers all right there in it; but there's something awful queer 'bout it; the folks don't act Riverboro, and don't talk Riverboro, 'cordin' to my notions. I call it a reg'lar book story."

"But," objected Rebecca, "the people in 'Cinderella' didn't act like us, and you thought that was a beautiful story when I told it to you."

"I know," replied Uncle Jerry, gaining eloquence in the heat of argument. "They did n't act like us, but't any rate they acted like 'emselves! Somehow they was all of a piece. Cinderella was a little too good, mebbe, and the sisters was most too thunderin' bad to live on the face o' the earth, and that fayry old lady that kep' the punkin' coach up her sleeve — well, anyhow, you jest believe that punkin' coach, rats, mice, and all, when you're hearin' 'bout it, 'fore ever you stop to think it ain't so.

"I don't know how 't is, but the folks in that Cinderella story seem to match together somehow; they're all pow'ful onlikely — the prince feller with the glass slipper, and the hull bunch; but jest the same you kind o' gulp 'em all down

in a lump. But land, Rebecky, nobody'd swaller that there village maiden o' your'n, and as for what's-his-name Littlefield, that come out o' them bushes, such a feller never 'd 'a' be'n *in* bushes! No, Rebecky, you're the smartest little critter there is in this township, and you beat your Uncle Jerry all holler when it comes to usin' a lead pencil, but I say that ain't no true Riverboro story! Look at the way they talk! What was that 'bout being '*betrothed*'?"

"'Betrothed' is a genteel word for engaged to be married," explained the crushed and chastened author; and it was fortunate the doting old man did not notice her eyes in the twilight, or he might have known that tears were not far away.

"Well, that's all right, then; I'm as ignorant as Cooper's cow when it comes to the dictionary. How about what's-his-name callin' the girl 'Naysweet'?"

"I thought myself that sounded foolish," confessed Rebecca; "but it's what the Doctor calls Cora when he tries to persuade her not to quarrel with his mother who comes to live with them. I know they don't say it in Riverboro or Temperance, but I thought perhaps it was Boston talk."

"Well, it ain't!" asserted Mr. Cobb decisively. "I've druv Boston men up in the stage

from Milltown many's the time, and none of 'em ever said Naysweet to me, nor nothin' like it. They talked like folks, every mother's son of 'em! If I'd 'a' had that what's-his-name on the 'harricane deck' o' the stage and he tried any naysweetin' on me, I'd 'a' pitched him into the cornfield, side o' the road. I guess you ain't growed up enough for that kind of a story, Rebecky, for your poetry can't be beat in York County, that's sure, and your compositions are good enough to read out loud in town meetin' any day!"

Rebecca brightened up a little and bade the old couple her usual affectionate good-night, but she descended the hill in a saddened mood. When she reached the bridge the sun, a ball of red fire, was setting behind Squire Bean's woods. As she looked, it shone full on the broad, still bosom of the river, and for one perfect instant the trees on the shores were reflected, all swimming in a sea of pink. Leaning over the rail, she watched the light fade from crimson to carmine, from carmine to rose, from rose to amber, and from amber to gray. Then withdrawing "Lancelot; or, The Parted Lovers" from her apron pocket, she tore the pages into bits and dropped them into the water below with a sigh.

"Uncle Jerry never said a word about the ending!" she thought; "and that was so nice!"

And she was right; but while Uncle Jerry was an illuminating critic when it came to the actions and language of his Riverboro neighbors, he had no power to direct the young mariner when she "followed the gleam," and used her imagination.

OUR SECRET SOCIETY

November, 187–.

Our Secret Society has just had a splendid picnic in Candace Milliken's barn.

Our name is the B. O. S. S., and not a single boy in the village has been able to guess it. It means Braid Over Shoulder Society, and that is the sign. All the members wear one of their braids over the right shoulder in front; the president's tied with red ribbon (I am the president) and all the rest tied with blue.

To attract the attention of another member when in company or at a public place we take the braid between the thumb and little finger and stand carelessly on one leg. This is the Secret Signal and the password is Sobb (B. O. S. S. spelled backwards) which was my idea and is thought rather uncommon.

One of the rules of the B. O. S. S. is that any member may be required to tell her besetting sin at any meeting, if asked to do so by a majority of the members.

This was Candace Milliken's idea and much opposed by everybody, but when it came to a vote so many of the girls were afraid of offending Candace that they agreed because there was nobody else's father and mother who would let us picnic in their

barn and use their plough, harrow, grindstone, sleigh, carryall, pung, sled, and wheelbarrow, which we did and injured hardly anything.

They asked me to tell my besetting sin at the very first meeting, and it nearly killed me to do it because it is such a common greedy one. It is that I can't bear to call the other girls when I have found a thick spot when we are out berrying in the summer time.

After I confessed, which made me dreadfully ashamed, every one of the girls seemed surprised and said they had never noticed that one but had each thought of something very different that I would be sure to think was my besetting sin. Then Emma Jane said that rather than tell hers she would resign from the Society and miss the picnic. So it made so much trouble that Candace gave up. We struck out the rule from the constitution and I had told my sin for nothing.

The reason we named ourselves the B. O. S. S. is, that Minnie Smellie has had her head shaved after scarlet fever and has no braid, so she can't be a member.

I don't want her for a member but I can't be happy thinking she will feel slighted, and it takes away half the pleasure of belonging to the Society myself and being president.

That, I think, is the principal trouble about doing mean and unkind things; that you can't do wrong and feel right, or be bad and feel good. If you only could you could do anything that came into your mind yet always be happy.

Minnie Smellie spoils everything she comes into but I suppose we other girls must either have our hair shaved and call ourselves The Baldheadians

or let her be some kind of a special officer in the B. O. S. S.

She might be the B. I. T. U. D. member (Braid in the Upper Drawer), for there is where Mrs. Smellie keeps it now that it is cut off.

WINTER THOUGHTS

March, 187–.

It is not such a cold day for March and I am up in the barn chamber with my coat and hood on and Aunt Jane's waterproof and my mittens.

After I do three pages I am going to hide away this book in the haymow till spring.

Perhaps they get made into icicles on the way but I do not seem to have any thoughts in the winter time. The barn chamber is full of thoughts in warm weather. The sky gives them to me, and the trees and flowers, and the birds, and the river; but now it is always gray and nipping, the branches are bare and the river is frozen.

It is too cold to write in my bedroom but while we still kept an open fire I had a few thoughts, but now there is an air-tight stove in the dining-room where we sit, and we seem so close together, Aunt Miranda, Aunt Jane, and I that I don't like to write in my book for fear they will ask me to read out loud my secret thoughts.

I have just read over the first part of my Thought Book and I have outgrown it all, just exactly as I have outgrown my last year's drab cashmere.

It is very queer how anybody can change so fast in a few months, but I remember that Emma Jane's cat had kittens the day my book was bought at Watson's store. Mrs. Perkins kept the prettiest white one, Abijah Flagg drowning all the others.

It seems strange to me that cats will go on having kittens when they know what becomes of them! We were very sad about it, but Mrs. Perkins said it was the way of the world and how things had to be.

I cannot help being glad that they do not do the same with children, or John and Jenny Mira Mark and me would all have had stones tied to our necks and been dropped into the deepest part of Sunny Brook, for Hannah and Fanny are the only truly handsome ones in the family.

Mrs. Perkins says I dress up well, but never being dressed up it does not matter much. At least they did n't wait to dress up the kittens to see how they would improve, before drowning them, but decided right away.

Emma Jane's kitten that was born the same day this book was is now quite an old cat who knows the way of the world herself, and how things have to be, for she has had one batch of kittens drowned already.

So perhaps it is not strange that my Thought Book seems so babyish and foolish to me when I think of all I have gone through and the millions of things I have learned, and how much better I spell than I did ten months ago.

My fingers are cold through the mittens, so good-bye dear Thought Book, friend of my childhood, now so far far behind me!

I will hide you in the haymow where you'll be warm and cozy all the long winter and where nobody can find you again in the summer time but your affectionate author,

REBECCA ROWENA RANDALL.

FOURTH CHRONICLE

A TRAGEDY IN MILLINERY

I

EMMA JANE PERKINS'S new winter dress was a blue and green Scotch plaid poplin, trimmed with narrow green velvet-ribbon and steel nail-heads. She had a gray jacket of thick furry cloth with large steel buttons up the front, a pair of green kid gloves, and a gray felt hat with an encircling band of bright green feathers. The band began in front with a bird's head and ended behind with a bird's tail, and angels could have desired no more beautiful toilette. That was her opinion, and it was shared to the full by Rebecca.

But Emma Jane, as Rebecca had once described her to Mr. Adam Ladd, was a rich blacksmith's daughter, and she, Rebecca, was a little half-orphan from a mortgaged farm "up Temperance way," dependent upon her spinster aunts for board, clothes, and schooling. Scotch plaid poplins were manifestly not for her, but dark-colored woolen stuffs were, and mittens, and last winter's coats and furs.

And how about hats? Was there hope in store for her there? she wondered, as she

walked home from the Perkins house, full of admiration for Emma Jane's winter outfit, and loyally trying to keep that admiration free from wicked envy. Her red-winged black hat was her second best, and although it was shabby she still liked it, but it would never do for church, even in Aunt Miranda's strange and never-to-be-comprehended views of suitable raiment.

There was a brown felt turban in existence, if one could call it existence when it had been rained on, snowed on, and hailed on for two seasons; but the trimmings had at any rate perished quite off the face of the earth, that was one comfort!

Emma Jane had said, rather indiscreetly, that at the village milliner's at Milliken's Mills there was a perfectly elegant pink breast to be had, a breast that began in a perfectly elegant solferino and terminated in a perfectly elegant magenta; two colors much in vogue at that time. If the old brown hat was to be her portion yet another winter, would Aunt Miranda conceal its deficiencies from a carping world beneath the shaded solferino breast? *Would* she? that was the question.

Filled with these perplexing thoughts, Rebecca entered the brick house, hung up her hood in the entry, and went into the dining-room.

Miss Jane was not there, but Aunt Miranda

sat by the window with her lap full of sewing things, and a chair piled with pasteboard boxes by her side. In one hand was the ancient, battered, brown felt turban, and in the other were the orange and black porcupine quills from Rebecca's last summer's hat; from the hat of the summer before that, and the summer before that, and so on back to prehistoric ages of which her childish memory kept no specific record, though she was sure that Temperance and Riverboro society did. Truly a sight to chill the blood of any eager young dreamer who had been looking at gayer plumage!

Miss Sawyer glanced up for a second with a satisfied expression and then bent her eyes again upon her work.

"If I was going to buy a hat trimming," she said, "I could n't select anything better or more economical than these quills! Your mother had them when she was married, and you wore them the day you come to the brick house from the farm; and I said to myself then that they looked kind of outlandish, but I've grown to like 'em now I've got used to 'em. You've been here for goin' on two years and they've hardly be'n out o' wear, summer or winter, more'n a month to a time! I declare they do beat all for service! It don't seem as if your mother could 'a' chose 'em, — Aurelia was always such a poor buyer! The black spills

are 'bout as good as new, but the orange ones are gittin' a little mite faded and shabby. I wonder if I could n't dip all of 'em in shoe blackin'? It seems real queer to put a porcupine into hat trimmin', though I declare I don't know jest what the animiles are like, it's be'n so long sence I looked at the pictures of 'em in a geography. I always thought their quills stood out straight and angry, but these kind o' curls round some at the ends, and that makes 'em stand the wind better. How do you like 'em on the brown felt?" she asked, inclining her head in a discriminating attitude and poising them awkwardly on the hat with her work-stained hand.

How did she like them on the brown felt indeed?

Miss Sawyer had not been looking at Rebecca, but the child's eyes were flashing, her bosom heaving, and her cheeks glowing with sudden rage and despair. All at once something happened. She forgot that she was speaking to an older person; forgot that she was dependent; forgot everything but her disappointment at losing the solferino breast, remembering nothing but the enchanting, dazzling beauty of Emma Jane Perkins's winter outfit; and, suddenly, quite without warning, she burst into a torrent of protest.

"I will *not* wear those hateful porcupine quills

again this winter! I will not! It's wicked, *wicked* to expect me to! Oh! how I wish there never had been any porcupines in the world, or that all of them had died before silly, hateful people ever thought of trimming hats with them! They curl round and tickle my ear! They blow against my cheek and sting it like needles! They do look outlandish, you said so yourself a minute ago. Nobody ever had any but only just me! The only porcupine was made into the only quills for me and nobody else! I wish instead of sticking *out* of the nasty beasts, that they stuck *into* them, same as they do into my cheek! I suffer, suffer, suffer, wearing them and hating them, and they will last forever and forever, and when I'm dead and can't help myself, somebody'll rip them out of my last year's hat and stick them on my head, and I'll be buried in them! Well, when *I* am buried *they* will be, that's one good thing! Oh, if I ever have a child I'll let her choose her own feathers and not make her wear ugly things like pigs' bristles and porcupine quills!"

With this lengthy tirade Rebecca vanished like a meteor, through the door and down the street, while Miranda Sawyer gasped for breath, and prayed to Heaven to help her understand such human whirlwinds as this Randall niece of hers.

This was at three o'clock, and at half-past

three Rebecca was kneeling on the rag carpet with her head in her aunt's apron, sobbing her contrition.

"Oh! Aunt Miranda, do forgive me if you can. It's the only time I've been bad for months! You know it is! You know you said last week I had n't been any trouble lately. Something broke inside of me and came tumbling out of my mouth in ugly words! The porcupine quills make me feel just as a bull does when he sees a red cloth; nobody understands how I suffer with them!"

Miranda Sawyer had learned a few lessons in the last two years, lessons which were making her (at least on her "good days") a trifle kinder, and at any rate a juster woman than she used to be. When she alighted on the wrong side of her four-poster in the morning, or felt an extra touch of rheumatism, she was still grim and unyielding; but sometimes a curious sort of melting process seemed to go on within her, when her whole bony structure softened, and her eyes grew less vitreous. At such moments Rebecca used to feel as if a superincumbent iron pot had been lifted off her head, allowing her to breathe freely and enjoy the sunshine.

"Well," she said finally, after staring first at Rebecca and then at the porcupine quills, as if to gain some insight into the situation, — "well, I never, sence I was born int' the world,

heerd such a speech as you've spoke, an' I guess there probably never was one. You'd better tell the minister what you said and see what he thinks of his prize Sunday-School scholar. But I'm too old and tired to scold and fuss, and try to train you same as I did at first. You can punish yourself this time, like you used to. Go fire something down the well, same as you did your pink parasol! You've apologized and we won't say no more about it today, but I expect you to show by extry good conduct how sorry you be! You care altogether too much about your looks and your clothes for a child, and you've got a temper that'll certainly land you in state's prison some o' these days!"

Rebecca wiped her eyes and laughed aloud. "No, no, Aunt Miranda, it won't, really! That was n't temper; I don't get angry with *people;* but only, once in a long while, with things; like those, — cover them up quick before I begin again! I'm all right! Shower's over, sun's out!"

Miss Miranda looked at her searchingly and uncomprehendingly. Rebecca's state of mind came perilously near to disease, she thought.

"Have you seen me buyin' any new bunnits, or your Aunt Jane?" she asked cuttingly. "Is there any particular reason why you should dress better than your elders? You might as well know that we're short of cash just now,

your Aunt Jane and me, and have no intention of riggin' you out like a Milltown fact'ry girl."

"Oh-h!" cried Rebecca, the quick tears starting again to her eyes and the color fading out of her cheeks, as she scrambled up from her knees to a seat on the sofa beside her aunt. "Oh-h! how ashamed I am! Quick, sew those quills on to the brown turban while I'm good! If I can't stand them I'll make a neat little gingham bag and slip over them!"

And so the matter ended, not as it customarily did, with cold words on Miss Miranda's part and bitter feelings on Rebecca's, but with a gleam of mutual understanding.

Mrs. Cobb, who was a master hand at coloring, dipped the offending quills in brown dye and left them to soak in it all night, not only making them a nice warm color, but somewhat weakening their rocky spines, so that they were not quite as rampantly hideous as before, in Rebecca's opinion.

Then Mrs. Perkins went to her bandbox in the attic and gave Miss Dearborn some pale blue velvet, with which she bound the brim of the brown turban and made a wonderful rosette, out of which the porcupine's defensive armor sprang, buoyantly and gallantly, like the plume of Henry of Navarre.

Rebecca was resigned, if not greatly comforted, but she had grace enough to conceal her

feelings, now that she knew economy was at the root of some of her aunt's decrees in matters of dress; and she managed to forget the solferino breast, save in sleep, where a vision of it had a way of appearing to her, dangling from the ceiling, and dazzling her so with its rich color that she used to hope the milliner would sell it that she might never be tempted with it when she passed the shop window.

One day, not long afterward, Miss Miranda borrowed Mr. Perkins's horse and wagon and took Rebecca with her on a drive to Union, to see about some sausage meat and head cheese. She intended to call on Mrs. Cobb, order a load of pine wood from Mr. Strout on the way, and leave some rags for a rug with old Mrs. Pease, so that the journey could be made as profitable as possible, consistent with the loss of time and the wear and tear on her second-best black dress.

The red-winged black hat was forcibly removed from Rebecca's head just before starting, and the nightmare turban substituted.

"You might as well begin to wear it first as last," remarked Miranda, while Jane stood in the side door and sympathized secretly with Rebecca.

"I will!" said Rebecca, ramming the stiff turban down on her head with a vindictive grimace, and snapping the elastic under her

long braids; "but it makes me think of what Mr. Robinson said when the minister told him his mother-in-law would ride in the same buggy with him at his wife's funeral."

"I can't see how any speech of Mr. Robinson's, made years an' years ago, can have anything to do with wearin' your turban down to Union," said Miranda, settling the lap robe over her knees.

"Well, it can; because he said: 'Have it that way, then, but it 'll spile the hull blamed trip for me!'"

Jane closed the door suddenly, partly because she experienced a desire to smile (a desire she had not felt for years before Rebecca came to the brick house to live), and partly because she had no wish to overhear what her sister would say when she took in the full significance of Rebecca's anecdote, which was a favorite one with Mr. Perkins.

It was a cold blustering day, with a high wind that promised to bring an early fall of snow. The trees were stripped bare of leaves, the ground was hard, and the wagon wheels rattled noisily over the thank-you-ma'ams.

"I'm glad I wore my Paisley shawl over my cloak," said Miranda. "Be you warm enough, Rebecca? Tie that white rigolette tighter round your neck. The wind fairly blows through bones. I most wish 't we'd waited till

anter day, for this Union road is all up hill or down, and we shan't get over the ground fast, it's so rough. Don't forget, when you go into Scott's, to say I want all the trimmin's when they send me the pork, for mebbe I can try out a little mite o' lard. The last load o' pine's gone turrible quick; I must see if 'Bijah Flagg can't get us some cut-rounds at the Mills, when he hauls for Squire Bean next time. Keep your mind on your drivin', Rebecca, and don't look at the trees and the sky so much. It's the same sky and same trees that have been here right along. Go awful slow down this hill and walk the hoss over Cook's Brook bridge, for I always suspicion it's goin' to break down under me, an' I should n't want to be dropped into that fast runnin' water this cold day. It'll be froze stiff by this time next week. Had n't you better get out and lead" —

The rest of the sentence was very possibly not vital, but at any rate it was never completed, for in the middle of the bridge a fierce gale of wind took Miss Miranda's Paisley shawl and blew it over her head. The long heavy ends whirled in opposite directions and wrapped themselves tightly about her wavering bonnet. Rebecca had the whip and the reins, and in trying to rescue her struggling aunt could not steady her own hat, which was suddenly torn from her head and tossed against the bridge

rail, where it trembled and flapped for an instant.

"My hat! oh! Aunt Miranda, my hateful hat!" cried Rebecca, never remembering at the instant how often she had prayed that the "fretful porcupine" might some time vanish in this violent manner, since it refused to die a natural death.

She had already stopped the horse, so, giving her aunt's shawl one last desperate twitch, she slipped out between the wagon wheels, and darted in the direction of the hated object, the loss of which had dignified it with a temporary value and importance.

The stiff brown turban rose in the air, then dropped and flew along the bridge; Rebecca pursued; it danced along and stuck between two of the railings; Rebecca flew after it, her long braids floating in the wind.

"Come back! Come back! Don't leave me alone with the team. I won't have it! Come back, and leave your hat!"

Miranda had at length extricated herself from the submerging shawl, but she was so blinded by the wind, and so confused that she did not measure the financial loss involved in her commands.

Rebecca heard, but her spirit being in arms, she made one more mad scramble for the vagrant hat, which now seemed possessed with

an evil spirit, for it flew back and forth, and bounded here and there, like a living thing, finally distinguishing itself by blowing between the horse's front and hind legs, Rebecca trying to circumvent it by going around the wagon, and meeting it on the other side.

It was no use; as she darted from behind the wheels the wind gave the hat an extra whirl, and scurrying in the opposite direction it soared above the bridge rail and disappeared into the rapid water below.

"Get in again!" cried Miranda, holding on her bonnet. "You done your best and it can't be helped, I only wish't I'd let you wear your black hat as you wanted to; and I wish't we'd never come such a day! The shawl has broke the stems of the velvet geraniums in my bonnet, and the wind has blowed away my shawl pin and my back comb. I'd like to give up and turn right back this minute, but I don't like to borrer Perkins's hoss again this month. When we get up in the woods you can smooth your hair down and tie the rigolette over your head and settle what's left of my bonnet; it'll be an expensive errant, this will!"

. . . . . .

II

It was not till next morning that Rebecca's heart really began its song of thanksgiving.

Her Aunt Miranda announced at breakfast, that as Mrs. Perkins was going to Milliken's Mills, Rebecca might go too, and buy a serviceable hat.

"You must n't pay over two dollars and a half, and you must n't get the pink bird without Mrs. Perkins says, and the milliner says, that it won't fade nor moult. Don't buy a light-colored felt because you 'll get sick of it in two or three years, same as you did the brown one. I always liked the shape of the brown one, and you 'll never get another trimmin' that 'll wear you like them quills."

"I hope not!" thought Rebecca.

"If you had put your elastic under your chin, same as you used to, and not worn it behind because you think it 's more grown-up an' fash'-onable, the wind never 'd 'a' took the hat off your head, and you would n't 'a' lost it; but the mischief 's done and you can go right over to Mis' Perkins now, so you won't miss her nor keep her waitin'. The two dollars and a half is in an envelope side o' the clock."

Rebecca swallowed the last spoonful of picked-up codfish on her plate, wiped her lips, and rose from her chair happier than the seraphs in Paradise.

The porcupine quills had disappeared from her life, and without any fault or violence on her part. She was wholly innocent and virtu-

ous, but nevertheless she was going to have a new hat with the solferino breast, should the adored object prove, under rigorous examination, to be practically indestructible.

> Whene'er I take my walks abroad,
> How many hats I 'll see;
> But if they 're trimmed with hedgehog quills
> They 'll not belong to me!

So she improvised, secretly and ecstatically, as she went towards the side entry.

"There's 'Bijah Flagg drivin' in," said Miss Miranda, going to the window. "Step out and see what he's got, Jane; some passel from the Squire, I guess. It's a paper bag and it may be a punkin, though he would n't wrop up a punkin, come to think of it! Shet the dinin'-room door, Jane; it's turrible drafty. Make haste, for the Squire's hoss never stan's still a minute 'cept when he's goin'!"

Abijah Flagg alighted and approached the side door with a grin.

"Guess what I've got for ye, Rebecky?"

No throb of prophetic soul warned Rebecca of her approaching doom.

"Nodhead apples?" she sparkled, looking as bright and rosy and satin-skinned as an apple herself.

"No; guess again."

"A flowering geranium?"

"Guess again!"

"Nuts? Oh! I can't, 'Bijah; I'm just going to Milliken's Mills on an errand, and I'm afraid of missing Mrs. Perkins. Show me quick! Is it really for me, or for Aunt Miranda?"

"Reely for you, I guess!" and he opened the large brown paper bag and drew from it the remains of a water-soaked hat!

They *were* remains, but there was no doubt of their nature and substance. They had clearly been a hat in the past, and one could even suppose that, when resuscitated, they might again assume their original form in some near and happy future.

Miss Miranda, full of curiosity, joined the group in the side entry at this dramatic moment.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed. "Where, and how under the canopy, did you ever?" —

"I was working on the dam at Union Falls yesterday," chuckled Abijah, with a pleased glance at each of the trio in turn, "an' I seen this little bunnit skippin' over the water jest as Becky does over the road. It's shaped kind o' like a boat, an' gorry, ef it wa'n't sailin' jest like a boat! 'Where hev I seen that kind of a bristlin' plume?' thinks I."

("Where indeed!" thought Rebecca stormily.)

"Then it come to me that I'd drove that plume to school and drove it to meetin' an'

drove it to the Fair an' drove it most everywheres on Becky. So I reached out a pole an' ketched it 'fore it got in amongst the logs an' come to any damage, an' here it is! The hat's passed in its checks, I guess; looks kind as if a wet elephant had stepped on it; but the plume's 'bout's good as new! I reely fetched the hat back for the sake o' the plume."

"It was real good of you, 'Bijah, an' we're all of us obliged to you," said Miranda, as she poised the hat on one hand and turned it slowly with the other.

"Well, I do say," she exclaimed, "and I guess I've said it before, that of all the wearin' plumes that ever I see, that one's the wearin'-est! Seems though it just would n't give up. Look at the way it's held Mis' Cobb's dye; it's about as brown's when it went int' the water."

"Dyed, but not a mite dead," grinned Abijah, who was somewhat celebrated for his puns.

"And I declare," Miranda continued, "when you think o' the fuss they make about ostriches, killin' 'em off by hundreds for the sake o' their feathers that'll string out and spoil in one hard rainstorm, — an' all the time lettin' useful porcupines run round with their quills on, why I can't hardly understand it, without milliners have found out jest how good they do last, an' so they won't use 'em for trimmin'. 'Bijah's right; the hat ain't no more use, Rebecca, but

you can buy you another this mornin' — any color or shape you fancy — an' have Miss Morton sew these brown quills on to it with some kind of a buckle or a bow, jest to hide the roots. Then you 'll be fixed for another season, thanks to 'Bijah."

Uncle Jerry and Aunt Sarah Cobb were made acquainted before very long with the part that destiny, or Abijah Flagg, had played in Rebecca's affairs, for, accompanied by the teacher, she walked to the old stage-driver's that same afternoon. Taking off her new hat with the venerable trimming, she laid it somewhat ostentatiously upside down on the kitchen table and left the room, dimpling a little more than usual.

Uncle Jerry rose from his seat, and, crossing the room, looked curiously into the hat and found that a circular paper lining was neatly pinned in the crown, and that it bore these lines, which were read aloud with great effect by Miss Dearborn, and with her approval were copied in the Thought Book for the benefit of posterity: —

It was the bristling porcupine,
  As he stood on his native heath,
He said, "I 'll pluck me some immortelles
  And make me up a wreath.
For tho' I may not live myself
  To more than a hundred and ten,

My quills will last till crack of doom,
  And maybe after then.
They can be colored blue or green
  Or orange, brown, or red,
But often as they may be dyed
  They never will be dead."
And so the bristling porcupine
  As he stood on his native heath,
Said, "I think I'll pluck me some immortelles
  And make me up a wreath."

R. R. R.

FIFTH CHRONICLE

THE SAVING OF THE COLORS

I

EVEN when Rebecca had left school, having attained the great age of seventeen and therefore able to look back over a past incredibly long and full, she still reckoned time not by years, but by certain important occurrences.

There was the year her father died; the year she left Sunnybrook Farm to come to her aunts in Riverboro; the year Sister Hannah became engaged; the year little Mira died; the year Abijah Flagg ceased to be Squire Bean's chore-boy, and astounded Riverboro by departing for Limerick Academy in search of an education; and finally the year of her graduation, which, to the mind of seventeen, seems rather the culmination than the beginning of existence.

Between these epoch-making events certain other happenings stood out in bold relief against the gray of dull daily life.

There was the day she first met her friend of friends, "Mr. Aladdin," and the later, even more radiant one when he gave her the coral

necklace. There was the day the Simpson family moved away from Riverboro under a cloud, and she kissed Clara Belle fervently at the cross-roads, telling her that she would always be faithful. There was the visit of the Syrian missionaries to the brick house. That was a bright, romantic memory, as strange and brilliant as the wonderful little birds' wings and breasts that the strangers brought from the Far East. She remembered the moment they asked her to choose some for herself, and the rapture with which she stroked the beautiful things as they lay on the black haircloth sofa. Then there was the coming of the new minister, for though many were tried only one was chosen; and finally there was the flag-raising, a festivity that thrilled Riverboro and Edgewood society from center to circumference, a festivity that took place just before she entered the Female Seminary at Wareham and said good-bye to kind Miss Dearborn and the village school.

There must have been other flag-raisings in history, — even the persons most interested in this particular one would grudgingly have allowed that much, — but it would have seemed to them improbable that any such flag-raising as theirs, either in magnitude of conception or brilliancy of actual performance, could twice glorify the same century. Of some pageants it is tacitly admitted that there can be no dupli-

cates, and the flag-raising at Riverboro Center was one of these; so that it is small wonder if Rebecca chose it as one of the important dates in her personal almanac.

The new minister's wife was the being, under Providence, who had conceived the germinal idea of the flag.

At this time the parish had almost settled down to the trembling belief that they were united on a pastor. In the earlier time a minister was chosen for life, and if he had faults, which was a probable enough contingency, and if his congregation had any, which is within the bounds of possibility, each bore with the other (not quite without friction), as old-fashioned husbands and wives once did, before the easy way out of the difficulty was discovered, or at least before it was popularized.

The faithful old parson had died after thirty years' preaching, and perhaps the newer methods had begun to creep in, for it seemed impossible to suit the two communities most interested in the choice.

The Rev. Mr. Davis, for example, was a spirited preacher, but persisted in keeping two horses in the parsonage stable, and in exchanging them whenever he could get faster ones. As a parochial visitor he was incomparable, dashing from house to house with such speed that he could cover the parish in a single after-

noon. This sporting tendency, which would never have been remarked in a British parson, was frowned upon in a New England village, and Deacon Milliken told Mr. Davis, when giving him what he alluded to as his "walking papers," that they did n't want the Edgewood church run by hoss power!

The next candidate pleased Edgewood, where morning preaching was held, but the other parish, which had afternoon service, declined to accept him because he wore a wig — an ill-matched, crookedly applied wig.

Number three was eloquent but given to gesticulation, and Mrs. Jere Burbank, the president of the Dorcas Society, who sat in a front pew, said she could n't bear to see a preacher scramble round the pulpit hot Sundays.

Number four, a genial, handsome man, gifted in prayer, was found to be a Democrat. The congregation was overwhelmingly Republican in its politics, and perceived something ludicrous, if not positively blasphemous, in a Democrat preaching the gospel. ("Ananias and Beelzebub 'll be candidatin' here, first thing we know!" exclaimed the outraged Republican nominee for district attorney.)

Number five had a feeble-minded child, which the hiring committee prophesied would always be standing in the parsonage front yard, making talk for the other denominations.

Number six was the Rev. Judson Baxter, the present incumbent; and he was voted to be as near perfection as a minister can be in this finite world. His young wife had a small income of her own, a distinct and unusual advantage, and the subscription committee hoped that they might not be eternally driving over the country to get somebody's fifty cents that had been over-due for eight months, but might take their onerous duties a little more easily.

"It does seem as if our ministers were the poorest lot!" complained Mrs. Robinson. "If their salary is two months behindhand they begin to be nervous! Seems as though they might lay up a little before they come here, and not live from hand to mouth so! The Baxters seem quite different, and I only hope they won't get wasteful and run into debt. They say she keeps the parlor blinds open 'bout half the time, and the room is lit up so often evenin's that the neighbors think her and Mr. Baxter must set in there. It don't seem hardly as if it could be so, but Mrs. Buzzell says 't is, and she says we might as well say good-bye to the parlor carpet, which is church property, for the Baxters are living all over it!"

This criticism was the only discordant note in the chorus of praise, and the people gradually grew accustomed to the open blinds and the over-used parlor carpet, which was just

completing its twenty-fifth year of honest service.

Mrs. Baxter communicated her patriotic idea of a new flag to the Dorcas Society, proposing that the women should cut and make it themselves.

"It may not be quite as good as those manufactured in the large cities," she said, "but we shall be proud to see our home-made flag flying in the breeze, and it will mean all the more to the young voters growing up, to remember that their mothers made it with their own hands."

"How would it do to let some of the girls help?" modestly asked Miss Dearborn, the Riverboro teacher. "We might choose the best sewers and let them put in at least a few stitches, so that they can feel they have a share in it."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Baxter. "We can cut the stripes and sew them together, and after we have basted on the white stars the girls can apply them to the blue ground. We must have it ready for the campaign rally, and we could n't christen it at a better time than in this presidential year."

II

In this way the great enterprise was started, and day by day the preparations went forward in the two villages.

The boys, as future voters and fighters, demanded an active share in the proceedings, and were organized by Squire Bean into a fife and drum corps, so that by day and night martial but most inharmonious music woke the echoes, and deafened mothers felt their patriotism oozing out at the soles of their shoes.

Dick Carter was made captain, for his grandfather had a gold medal given him by Queen Victoria for rescuing three hundred and twenty-six passengers from a sinking British vessel. Riverboro thought it high time to pay some graceful tribute to Great Britain in return for her handsome conduct to Captain Nahum Carter, and human imagination could contrive nothing more impressive than a vicarious share in the flag-raising.

Living Perkins tried to be happy in the ranks, for he was offered no official position, principally, Mrs. Smellie observed, because "his father's war record wa'n't clean." "Oh, yes! Jim Perkins went to the war," she continued. "He hid out behind the hencoop when they was draftin', but they found him and took him along. He got into one battle, too, somehow or 'nother, but he run away from it. He was allers cautious, Jim was; if he ever see trouble of any kind comin' towards him, he was out o' sight 'fore it got a chance to light. He said eight dollars a month, without bounty, would n't pay

him to stop bullets for. He would n't fight a skeeter, Jim would n't, but land! we ain't to war all the time, and he's a good neighbor and a good blacksmith."

Miss Dearborn was to be Columbia and the older girls of the two schools were to be the States. Such trade in muslins and red, white, and blue ribbons had never been known since "Watson kep' store," and the number of brief white petticoats hanging out to bleach would have caused the passing stranger to imagine Riverboro a continual dancing-school.

Juvenile virtue, both male and female, reached an almost impossible height, for parents had only to lift a finger and say, "You shan't go to the flag-raising!" and the refractory spirit at once armed itself for new struggles toward the perfect life.

Mr. Jeremiah Cobb had consented to impersonate Uncle Sam, and was to drive Columbia and the States to the "raising" on the top of his own stage. Meantime the boys were drilling, the ladies were cutting and basting and stitching, and the girls were sewing on stars; for the starry part of the spangled banner was to remain with each of them in turn until she had performed her share of the work.

It was felt by one and all a fine and splendid service indeed to help in the making of the flag, and if Rebecca was proud to be of the

chosen ones, so was her Aunt Jane Sawyer, who had taught her all her delicate stitches.

On a long-looked-for afternoon in August the minister's wife drove up to the brick-house door, and handed out the great piece of bunting to Rebecca, who received it in her arms with as much solemnity as if it had been a child awaiting baptismal rites.

"I'm so glad!" she sighed happily. "I thought it would never come my turn!"

"You should have had it a week ago, but Huldah Meserve upset the ink bottle over her star, and we had to baste on another one. You are the last, though, and then we shall sew the stars and stripes together, and Seth Strout will get the top ready for hanging. Just think, it won't be many days before you children will be pulling the rope with all your strength, the band will be playing, the men will be cheering, and the new flag will go higher and higher, till the red, white, and blue shows against the sky!"

Rebecca's eyes fairly blazed. "Shall I 'fell on' my star, or buttonhole it?" she asked.

"Look at all the others and make the most beautiful stitches you can, that's all. It is your star, you know, and you can even imagine it is your state, and try and have it the best of all. If everybody else is trying to do the same thing with her state, that will make a great country, won't it?"

Rebecca's eyes spoke glad confirmation of the idea. "My star, my state!" she repeated joyously. "Oh, Mrs. Baxter, I'll make such fine stitches you'll think the white grew out of the blue!"

The new minister's wife looked pleased to see her spark kindle a flame in the young heart. "You can sew so much of yourself into your star," she went on in the glad voice that made her so winsome, "that when you are an old lady you can put on your specs and find it among all the others. Good-bye! Come up to the parsonage Saturday afternoon; Mr. Baxter wants to see you."

"Judson, help that dear little genius of a Rebecca all you can!" she said that night, when they were cozily talking in their parlor and living "all over" the parish carpet. "I don't know what she may, or may not, come to, some day; I only wish she were ours! If you could have seen her clasp the flag tight in her arms and put her cheek against it, and watched the tears of feeling start in her eyes when I told her that her star was her state! I kept whispering to myself, 'Covet not thy neighbor's child!'"

Daily at four o'clock Rebecca scrubbed her hands almost to the bone, brushed her hair, and otherwise prepared herself in body, mind, and spirit for the consecrated labor of sewing

"My star, my state!" she repeated joyously

on her star. All the time that her needle cautiously, conscientiously formed the tiny stitches she was making rhymes "in her head," her favorite achievement being this:—

> Your star, my star, all our stars together,
> They make the dear old banner proud
> To float in the bright fall weather.

There was much discussion as to which of the girls should impersonate the State of Maine, for that was felt to be the highest honor in the gift of the committee.

Alice Robinson was the prettiest child in the village, but she was very shy and by no means a general favorite.

Minnie Smellie possessed the handsomest dress and a pair of white slippers and open-work stockings that nearly carried the day. Still, as Miss Delia Weeks well said, she was so stupid that if she should suck her thumb in the very middle of the exercises nobody 'd be a dite surprised!

Huldah Meserve was next voted upon, and the fact that if she were not chosen her father might withdraw his subscription to the brass band fund was a matter for grave consideration.

"I kind o' hate to have such a giggler for the State of Maine; let her be the Goddess of Liberty," proposed Mrs. Burbank, whose patriotism was more local than national.

"How would Rebecca Randall do for Maine,

and let her speak some of her verses?" suggested the new minister's wife, who, could she have had her way, would have given all the prominent parts to Rebecca, from Uncle Sam down.

So, beauty, fashion, and wealth having been tried and found wanting, the committee discussed the claims of talent, and it transpired that to the awe-stricken Rebecca fell the chief plum in the pudding. It was a tribute to her gifts that there was no jealousy or envy among the other girls; they readily conceded her special fitness for the rôle.

Her life had not been pressed down full to the brim of pleasures, and she had a sort of distrust of joy in the bud. Not until she saw it in full radiance of bloom did she dare embrace it. She had never read any verse but Byron, Felicia Hemans, bits of "Paradise Lost," and the selections in the school readers, but she would have agreed heartily with the poet who said: —

> Not by appointment do we meet delight
> And joy; they heed not our expectancy;
> But round some corner in the streets of life
> They on a sudden clasp us with a smile.

For many nights before the raising, when she went to her bed she said to herself, after she had finished her prayers: "It can't be true that I'm chosen for the State of Maine! It just *can't*

be true! Nobody could be good *enough*, but oh, I'll try to be as good as I can! To be going to Wareham Seminary next week and to be the State of Maine too! Oh! I must pray *hard* to God to keep me meek and humble!"

III

The flag was to be raised on a Tuesday, and on the previous Sunday it became known to the children that Clara Belle Simpson was coming back from Acreville, coming to live with Mrs. Fogg and take care of the baby, called by the neighborhood boys "the Fogg horn," on account of his excellent voice production.

Clara Belle was one of Miss Dearborn's original flock, and if she were left wholly out of the festivities she would be the only girl of suitable age to be thus slighted; it seemed clear to the juvenile mind, therefore, that neither she nor her descendants would ever recover from such a blow. But, under all the circumstances, would she be allowed to join in the procession? Even Rebecca, the optimistic, feared not, and the committee confirmed her fears by saying that Abner Simpson's daughter certainly could not take any prominent part in the ceremony, but they hoped that Mrs. Fogg would allow her to witness it.

When Abner Simpson, urged by the town authorities, took his wife and seven children

away from Riverboro to Acreville, just over the border in the next county, Riverboro went to bed leaving its barn and shed doors unfastened, and drew long breaths of gratitude to Providence.

Of most winning disposition and genial manners, Mr. Simpson had not that instinctive comprehension of property rights which renders a man a valuable citizen.

Squire Bean was his nearest neighbor, and he conceived the novel idea of paying Simpson five dollars a year not to steal from him, a method occasionally used in the Highlands in early days.

The bargain was struck, and adhered to religiously for a twelve-month, but on the second of January Mr. Simpson announced the verbal contract as formally broken.

"I did n't know what I was doin' when I made it, Squire," he urged. "In the first place, it's a slur on my reputation and an injury to my self-respect. Secondly, it's a nervous strain on me; and thirdly, five dollars don't pay me!"

Squire Bean was so struck with the unique and convincing nature of these arguments that he could scarcely restrain his admiration, and he confessed to himself afterward, that unless Simpson's mental attitude could be changed he was perhaps a fitter subject for medical science than the state prison.

Abner was a most unusual thief, and conducted his operations with a tact and neighborly consideration none too common in the profession. He would never steal a man's scythe in haying-time, nor his fur lap-robe in the coldest of the winter. The picking of a lock offered no attractions to him; "he wa'n't no burglar," he would have scornfully asserted. A strange horse and wagon hitched by the roadside was the most flagrant of his thefts; but it was the small things — the hatchet or axe on the chopping-block, the tin pans sunning at the side door, a stray garment bleaching on the grass, a hoe, rake, shovel, or a bag of early potatoes, — that tempted him most sorely; and these appealed to him not so much for their intrinsic value as because they were so excellently adapted to swapping. The swapping was really the enjoyable part of the procedure, the theft was only a sad but necessary preliminary; for if Abner himself had been a man of sufficient property to carry on his business operations independently, it is doubtful if he would have helped himself so freely to his neighbor's goods.

Riverboro regretted the loss of Mrs. Simpson, who was useful in scrubbing, cleaning, and washing, and was thought to exercise some influence over her predatory spouse. There was a story of their early married life, when they had a farm; a story to the effect that Mrs.

Simpson always rode on every load of hay that her husband took to Milltown, with the view of keeping him sober through the day. After he turned out of the country road and approached the metropolis, it was said that he used to bury the docile lady in the load. He would then drive on to the scales, have the weight of hay entered in the buyer's book, take his horses to the stable for feed and water, and when a favorable opportunity offered he would assist the hot and panting Mrs. Simpson out of the side or back of the rack, and gallantly brush the straw from her person. For this reason it was always asserted that Abner Simpson sold his wife every time he went to Milltown, but the story was never fully substantiated, and at all events it was the only suspected blot on meek Mrs. Simpson's personal reputation.

As for the Simpson children, they were missed chiefly as familiar figures by the roadside; but Rebecca honestly loved Clara Belle, notwithstanding her Aunt Miranda's opposition to the intimacy. Rebecca's "taste for low company" was a source of continual anxiety to her aunt.

"Anything that's human flesh is good enough for her!" Miranda groaned to Jane. "She'll ride with the rag-sack-and-bottle peddler just as quick as she would with the minister; she always sets beside the St. Vitus' dance young one at Sabbath School; and she's forever riggin'

and onriggin' that dirty Simpson baby! She reminds me of a puppy that'll always go to everybody that'll have him!"

It was thought very creditable to Mrs. Fogg that she sent for Clara Belle to live with her and go to school part of the year.

"She'll be useful," said Mrs. Fogg, "and she'll be out of her father's way, and so keep honest; though she's so awful hombly I've no fears for her. A girl with her red hair, freckles, and cross-eyes can't fall into no kind of sin, I don't believe."

Mrs. Fogg requested that Clara Belle should be started on her journey from Acreville by train and come the rest of the way by stage, and she was disturbed to receive word on Sunday that Mr. Simpson had borrowed a "good roader" from a new acquaintance, and would himself drive the girl from Acreville to Riverboro, a distance of thirty-five miles. That he would arrive in their vicinity on the very night before the flag-raising was thought by Riverboro to be a public misfortune, and several residents hastily determined to deny themselves a sight of the festivities and remain watchfully on their own premises.

On Monday afternoon the children were rehearsing their songs at the meeting-house. As Rebecca came out on the broad wooden steps

she watched Mrs. Peter Meserve's buggy out of sight, for in front, wrapped in a cotton sheet, lay the precious flag. After a few chattering good-byes and weather prophecies with the other girls, she started on her homeward walk, dropping in at the parsonage to read her verses to the minister.

He welcomed her gladly as she removed her white cotton gloves (hastily slipped on outside the door, for ceremony) and pushed back the funny hat with the yellow and black porcupine quills — the hat with which she made her first appearance in Riverboro society.

"You've heard the beginning, Mr. Baxter; now will you please tell me if you like the last verse?" she asked, taking out her paper. "I've only read it to Alice Robinson, and I think perhaps she can never be a poet, though she's a splendid writer. Last year when she was twelve she wrote a birthday poem to herself, and she made 'natal' rhyme with 'Milton,' which, of course, it would n't. I remember every verse ended: —

> This is my day so natal
> And I will follow Milton.

Another one of hers was written just because she could n't help it, she said. This was it: —

> Let me to the hills away,
> Give me pen and paper;
> I'll write until the earth will sway
> The story of my Maker."

The minister could scarcely refrain from smiling, but he controlled himself that he might lose none of Rebecca's quaint observations. When she was perfectly at ease, unwatched and uncriticized, she was a marvelous companion.

"The name of the poem is going to be 'My Star,'" she continued, "and Mrs. Baxter gave me all the ideas, but somehow there's a kind of magicness when they get into poetry, don't you think so?" (Rebecca always talked to grown people as if she were their age, or, a more subtle and truer distinction, as if they were hers.)

"It has often been so remarked, in different words," agreed the minister.

"Mrs. Baxter said that each star was a state, and if each state did its best we should have a splendid country. Then once she said that we ought to be glad the war is over and the States are all at peace together; and I thought Columbia must be glad, too, for Miss Dearborn says she's the mother of all the States. So I'm going to have it end like this: I did n't write it, I just sewed it while I was working on my star: —

For it's your star, my star, all the stars together,
  That make our country's flag so proud
To float in the bright fall weather.
Northern stars, Southern stars, stars of the East and West,
  Side by side they lie at peace
On the dear flag's mother-breast."

"'Oh! many are the poets that are sown by Nature,'" thought the minister, quoting Wordsworth to himself. "And I wonder what becomes of them! That's a pretty idea, little Rebecca, and I don't know whether you or my wife ought to have the more praise. What made you think of the stars lying on the flag's 'mother-breast'? Where did you get that word?"

"Why" (and the young poet looked rather puzzled), "that's the way it is; the flag is the whole country — the mother — and the stars are the states. The stars had to lie somewhere: '*lap*' nor '*arms*' would n't sound well with 'West,' so, of course, I said '*breast*,'" Rebecca answered, with some surprise at the question; and the minister put his hand under her chin and kissed her softly on the forehead when he said good-bye at the door.

IV

Rebecca walked rapidly along in the gathering twilight, thinking of the eventful morrow.

As she approached the turning on the left called the old Milltown road, she saw a white horse and wagon, driven by a man with a rakish, flapping, Panama hat, come rapidly around the turn and disappear over the long hills leading down to the falls. There was no mistaking him; there never was another Abner Simpson,

with his lean height, his bushy reddish hair, the gay cock of his hat, and the long, piratical, upturned mustaches, which the boys used to say were used as hat-racks by the Simpson children at night. The old Milltown road ran past Mrs. Fogg's house, so he must have left Clara Belle there, and Rebecca's heart glowed to think that her poor little friend need not miss the raising.

She began to run now, fearful of being late for supper, and covered the ground to the falls in a brief time. As she crossed the bridge she again saw Abner Simpson's team, drawn up at the watering-trough.

Coming a little nearer, with the view of inquiring for the family, her quick eye caught sight of something unexpected. A gust of wind blew up a corner of a linen lap-robe in the back of the wagon, and underneath it she distinctly saw the white-sheeted bundle that held the flag; the bundle with a tiny, tiny spot of red bunting peeping out at one corner. It is true she had eaten, slept, dreamed red, white, and blue for weeks, but there was no mistaking the evidence of her senses; the idolized flag, longed for, worked for, sewed for, that flag was in the back of Abner Simpson's wagon, and if so, what would become of the raising?

Acting on blind impulse, she ran toward the watering-trough, calling out in her clear treble:

"Mr. Simpson! Oh, Mr. Simpson, will you let me ride a piece with you and hear all about Clara Belle? I'm going part way over to the Center on an errand." (So she was; a most important errand, — to recover the flag of her country at present in the hands of the foe!)

Mr. Simpson turned round in his seat and cried heartily, "Certain sure I will!" for he liked the fair sex, young and old, and Rebecca had always been a prime favorite with him. "Climb right in! How's everybody? Glad to see ye! The folks talk 'bout ye from sun-up to sun-down, and Clara Belle can't hardly wait for a sight of ye!"

Rebecca scrambled up, trembling and pale with excitement. She did not in the least know what was going to happen, but she was sure that the flag, when in the enemy's country, must be at least a little safer with the State of Maine sitting on top of it!

Mr. Simpson began a long monologue about Acreville, the house he lived in, the pond in front of it, Mrs. Simpson's health, and various items of news about the children, varied by reports of his personal misfortunes. He put no questions, and asked no replies, so this gave the inexperienced soldier a few seconds to plan a campaign. There were three houses to pass; the Browns' at the corner, the Millikens', and the Robinsons' on the brow of the hill. If Mr.

Robinson were in the front yard she might tell Mr. Simpson she wanted to call there and ask Mr. Robinson to hold the horse's head while she got out of the wagon. Then she might fly to the back before Mr. Simpson could realize the situation, and dragging out the precious bundle, sit on it hard, while Mr. Robinson settled the matter of ownership with Mr. Simpson.

This was feasible, but it meant a quarrel between the two men, who held an ancient grudge against each other, and Mr. Simpson was a valiant fighter, as the various sheriffs who had attempted to arrest him could cordially testify. It also meant that everybody in the village would hear of the incident and poor Clara Belle be branded again as the child of a thief.

Another idea danced into her excited brain; such a clever one she could hardly believe it hers. She might call Mr. Robinson to the wagon, and when he came close to the wheels she might say, "all of a sudden": "Please take the flag out of the back of the wagon, Mr. Robinson. We have brought it here for you to keep overnight." Mr. Simpson might be so surprised that he would give up his prize rather than be suspected of stealing.

But as they neared the Robinsons' house there was not a sign of life to be seen; so the last plan, ingenious though it was, was perforce abandoned.

The road now lay between thick pine woods with no dwelling in sight. It was growing dusk and Rebecca was driving along the lonely way with a person who was generally called Slippery Simpson.

Not a thought of fear crossed her mind, save the fear of bungling in her diplomacy, and so losing the flag. She knew Mr. Simpson well, and a pleasanter man was seldom to be met. She recalled an afternoon when he came home and surprised the whole school playing the Revolutionary War in his helter-skelter dooryard, and the way in which he had joined the British forces and impersonated General Burgoyne had greatly endeared him to her. The only difficulty was to find proper words for her delicate mission, for, of course, if Mr. Simpson's anger were aroused, he would politely push her out of the wagon and drive away with the flag. Perhaps if she led the conversation in the right direction an opportunity would present itself. She well remembered how Emma Jane Perkins had failed to convert Jacob Moody, simply because she failed to "lead up" to the delicate question of his manner of life. Clearing her throat nervously, she began: —

"Is it likely to be fair to-morrow?"

"Guess so; clear as a bell. What's on foot; a picnic?"

"No; we're to have a grand flag-raising!"

("That is," she thought, "if we have any flag to raise!")

"That so? Where?"

"The three villages are to club together and have a rally, and raise the flag at the Center. There'll be a brass band, and speakers, and the Mayor of Portland, and the man that will be governor if he's elected, and a dinner in the Grange Hall, and we girls are chosen to raise the flag."

"I want to know! That'll be grand, won't it?" (Still not a sign of consciousness on the part of Abner.)

"I hope Mrs. Fogg will take Clara Belle, for it will be splendid to look at! Mr. Cobb is going to be Uncle Sam and drive us on the stage. Miss Dearborn — Clara Belle's old teacher, you know — is going to be Columbia; the girls will be the States of the Union, and oh, Mr. Simpson, I am the one to be the State of Maine!" (This was not altogether to the point, but a piece of information impossible to conceal.)

Mr. Simpson flourished the whipstock and gave a loud, hearty laugh. Then he turned in his seat and regarded Rebecca curiously. "You're kind o' small, hain't ye, for so big a state as this one?" he asked.

"Any of us would be too small," replied Rebecca with dignity, "but the committee asked me, and I am going to try hard to do well."

The tragic thought that there might be no occasion for anybody to do anything, well or ill, suddenly overcame her here, and putting her hand on Mr. Simpson's sleeve, she attacked the subject practically and courageously.

"Oh, Mr. Simpson, dear Mr. Simpson, it's such a mortifying subject I can't bear to say anything about it, but please give us back our flag! Don't, *don't* take it over to Acreville, Mr. Simpson! We've worked so long to make it, and it was so hard getting the money for the bunting! Wait a minute, please; don't be angry, and don't say no just yet, till I explain more. It'll be so dreadful for everybody to get there to-morrow morning and find no flag to raise, and the band and the mayor all disappointed, and the children crying, with their muslin dresses all bought for nothing! O dear Mr. Simpson, please don't take our flag away from us!"

The apparently astonished Abner pulled his mustaches and exclaimed: "But I don't know what you're drivin' at! Who's got yer flag? *I* hain't!"

Could duplicity, deceit, and infamy go any further, Rebecca wondered, and her soul filling with righteous wrath, she cast discretion to the winds and spoke a little more plainly, bending her great swimming eyes on the now embarrassed Abner, who looked like an angle-worm wriggling on a pin.

"Mr. Simpson, how can you say that, when I saw the flag in the back of your wagon myself, when you stopped to water the horse? It's wicked of you to take it, and I cannot bear it!" (Her voice broke now, for a doubt of Mr. Simpson's yielding suddenly darkened her mind.) "If you keep it, you'll have to keep me, for I won't be parted from it! I can't fight like the boys, but I can pinch and scratch, and I *will* scratch, just like a panther — I'll lie right down on my star and not move, if I starve to death!"

"Look here, hold your hosses 'n' don't cry till you git something to cry for!" grumbled the outraged Abner, to whom a clue had just come; and leaning over the wagon-back he caught hold of a corner of white sheet and dragged up the bundle, scooping off Rebecca's hat in the process, and almost burying her in bunting.

She caught the treasure passionately to her heart and stifled her sobs in it, while Abner exclaimed: "I swan to man, if that hain't a flag! Well, in that case you're good 'n' welcome to it! Land! I seen that bundle lyin' in the middle o' the road and I says to myself, that's somebody's washin' and I'd better pick it up and leave it at the post-office to be claimed; 'n' all the time it was a flag!"

This was a Simpsonian version of the matter, the fact being that a white-covered bundle lying

on the Meserves' front steps had attracted his practiced eye, and slipping in at the open gate he had swiftly and deftly removed it to his wagon on general principles; thinking if it were clean clothes it would be extremely useful, and in any event there was no good in passing by something flung into your very arms, so to speak. He had had no leisure to examine the bundle, and indeed took little interest in it. Probably he stole it simply from force of habit, and because there was nothing else in sight to steal, everybody's premises being preternaturally tidy and empty, almost as if his visit had been expected!

Rebecca was a practical child, and it seemed to her almost impossible that so heavy a bundle should fall out of Mrs. Meserve's buggy and not be noticed; but she hoped that Mr. Simpson was telling the truth, and she was too glad and grateful to doubt any one at the moment.

"Thank you, thank you ever so much, Mr. Simpson. You're the nicest, kindest, politest man I ever knew, and the girls will be so pleased you gave us back the flag, and so will the Dorcas Society; they'll be sure to write you a letter of thanks; they always do."

"Tell 'em not to bother 'bout any thanks," said Simpson, beaming virtuously. "But land! I'm glad 't was me that happened to see that

bundle in the road and take the trouble to pick it up." ("Jest to think of it's bein' a flag!" he thought; "if ever there was a pesky, wuthless thing to trade off, 't would be a great, gormin' flag like that!")

"Can I get out now, please?" asked Rebecca. "I want to go back, for Mrs. Meserve will be dreadfully nervous when she finds out she dropped the flag, and she has heart trouble."

"No, you don't," objected Mr. Simpson gallantly, turning the horse. "Do you think I'd let a little creeter like you lug that great heavy bundle? I hain't got time to go back to Meserve's, but I'll take you to the corner and dump you there, flag 'n' all, and you can get some o' the men-folks to carry it the rest o' the way. You'll wear it out, huggin' it so!"

"I helped make it and I adore it!" said Rebecca, who was in a high-pitched and grandiloquent mood. "Why don't *you* like it? It's your country's flag."

Simpson smiled an indulgent smile and looked a trifle bored at these frequent appeals to his extremely rusty higher feelings.

"I don' know's I've got any partic'lar int'rest in the country," he remarked languidly. "I know I don't owe nothin' to it, nor own nothin' in it!"

"You own a star on the flag, same as everybody," argued Rebecca, who had been feeding

on patriotism for a month; "and you own a state, too, like all of us!"

"Land! I wish't I did! or even a quarter section!" sighed Mr. Simpson, feeling somehow a little more poverty-stricken and discouraged than usual.

As they approached the corner and the watering-trough where four cross-roads met, the whole neighborhood seemed to be in evidence, and Mr. Simpson suddenly regretted his chivalrous escort of Rebecca; especially when, as he neared the group, an excited lady, wringing her hands, turned out to be Mrs. Peter Meserve, accompanied by Huldah, the Browns, Mrs. Milliken, Abijah Flagg, and Miss Dearborn.

"Do you know anything about the new flag, Rebecca?" shrieked Mrs. Meserve, too agitated, at the moment, to notice the child's companion.

"It's right here in my lap, all safe," responded Rebecca joyously.

"You careless, meddlesome young one, to take it off my steps where I left it just long enough to go round to the back and hunt up my door-key! You've given me a fit of sickness with my weak heart, and what business was it of yours? I believe you think you *own* the flag! Hand it over to me this minute!"

Rebecca was climbing down during this torrent of language, but as she turned she flashed

one look of knowledge at the false Simpson, a look that went through him from head to foot, as if it were carried by electricity.

He had not deceived her after all, owing to the angry chatter of Mrs. Meserve. He had been handcuffed twice in his life, but no sheriff had ever discomfited him so thoroughly as this child. Fury mounted to his brain, and as soon as she was safely out from between the wheels he stood up in the wagon and flung the flag out in the road in the midst of the excited group.

"Take it, you pious, passimonious, cheese-parin', hair-splittin', back-bitin', flag-raisin' crew!" he roared. "Rebecca never took the flag; I found it in the road, I say!"

"You never, no such a thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Meserve. "You found it on the doorsteps in my garden!"

"Mebbe 't was your garden, but it was so chock full o' weeds I *thought* 't was the road," retorted Abner. "I vow I would n't 'a' given the old rag back to one o' *you*, not if you begged me on your bended knees! But Rebecca's a friend o' my folks and can do with her flag's she's a mind to, and the rest o' ye can go to thunder — 'n' stay there, for all I care!"

So saying, he made a sharp turn, gave the gaunt white horse a lash and disappeared in a cloud of dust, before the astonished Mr. Brown,

the only man in the party, had a thought of detaining him.

"I'm sorry I spoke so quick, Rebecca," said Mrs. Meserve, greatly mortified at the situation. "But don't you believe a word that lyin' critter said! He did steal it off my doorstep, and how did you come to be ridin' and consortin' with him? I believe it would kill your Aunt Miranda if she should hear about it!"

The little school-teacher put a sheltering arm round Rebecca as Mr. Brown picked up the flag and dusted and folded it.

"I'm willing she should hear about it," Rebecca answered. "I did n't do anything to be ashamed of! I saw the flag in the back of Mr. Simpson's wagon and I just followed it. There were n't any men or any Dorcases to take care of it and so it fell to me! You would n't have had me let it out of my sight, would you, and we going to raise it to-morrow morning?"

"Rebecca's perfectly right, Mrs. Meserve!" said Miss Dearborn proudly. "And it's lucky there was somebody quick-witted enough to 'ride and consort' with Mr. Simpson! I don't know what the village will think, but seems to me the town clerk might write down in his book, '*This day the State of Maine saved the flag!*'"

SIXTH CHRONICLE

THE STATE O' MAINE GIRL

I

THE foregoing episode, if narrated in a romance, would undoubtedly have been called "The Saving of the Colors," but at the nightly conversazione in Watson's store it was alluded to as the way little Becky Randall got the flag away from Slippery Simpson.

Dramatic as it was, it passed into the limbo of half-forgotten things in Rebecca's mind, its brief importance submerged in the glories of the next day.

There was a painful prelude to these glories. Alice Robinson came to spend the night with Rebecca, and when the bedroom door closed upon the two girls, Alice announced her intention of "doing up" Rebecca's front hair in leads and rags, and braiding the back in six tight, wetted braids.

Rebecca demurred. Alice persisted.

"Your hair is so long and thick and dark and straight," she said, "that you'll look like an Injun!"

"I am the State of Maine; it all belonged to the Indians once," Rebecca remarked gloomily,

for she was curiously shy about discussing her personal appearance.

"And your wreath of little pine-cones won't set decent without crimps," continued Alice.

Rebecca glanced in the cracked looking-glass and met what she considered an accusing lack of beauty, a sight that always either saddened or enraged her according to circumstances; then she sat down resignedly and began to help Alice in the philanthropic work of making the State of Maine fit to be seen at the raising.

Neither of the girls was an expert hairdresser, and at the end of an hour, when the sixth braid was tied, and Rebecca had given one last shuddering look in the mirror, both were ready to weep with fatigue.

The candle was blown out and Alice soon went to sleep, but Rebecca tossed on her pillow, its goose-feathered softness all dented by the cruel lead knobs and the knots of twisted rags. She slipped out of bed and walked to and fro, holding her aching head with both hands. Finally she leaned on the window-sill, watching the still weather-vane on Alice's barn and breathing in the fragrance of the ripening apples, until her restlessness subsided under the clear starry beauty of the night.

At six in the morning the girls were out of bed, for Alice could hardly wait until Rebecca's

hair was taken down, she was so eager to see the result of her labors.

The leads and rags were painfully removed, together with much hair, the operation being punctuated by a series of squeaks, squeals, and shrieks on the part of Rebecca and a series of warnings from Alice, who wished the preliminaries to be kept secret from the aunts, that they might the more fully appreciate the radiant result.

Then came the unbraiding, and then — dramatic moment — the "combing out"; a difficult, not to say impossible process, in which the hairs that had resisted the earlier stages almost gave up the ghost.

The long front strands had been wound up from various angles and by various methods, so that, when released, they assumed the strangest, most obstinate, most unexpected attitudes. When the comb was dragged through the last braid, the wild, tortured, electric hairs following, and then rebounding from it in a bristling, snarling tangle, Massachusetts gave one encompassing glance at the State o' Maine's head, and announced her intention of going home to breakfast! She was deeply grieved at the result of her attempted beautifying, but she felt that meeting Miss Miranda Sawyer at the morning meal would not mend matters in the least, so slipping out of the side door, she ran up

Guide-Board hill as fast as her legs could carry her.

The State o' Maine, deserted and somewhat unnerved, sat down before the glass and attacked her hair doggedly and with set lips, working over it until Miss Jane called her to breakfast; then, with a boldness born of despair, she entered the dining-room, where her aunts were already seated at table. To "draw fire" she whistled, a forbidden joy, which only attracted more attention, instead of diverting it. There was a moment of silence after the grotesque figure was fully taken in; then came a moan from Jane and a groan from Miranda.

"What have you done to yourself?" asked Miranda sternly.

"Made an effort to be beautiful and failed!" jauntily replied Rebecca, but she was too miserable to keep up the fiction. "Oh, Aunt Miranda, don't scold. I'm so unhappy! Alice and I rolled up my hair to curl it for the raising. She said it was so straight I looked like an Indian!"

"Mebbe you did," vigorously agreed Miranda, "but't any rate you looked like a Christian Injun, 'n' now you look like a heathen Injun; that's all the difference I can see. What can we do with her, Jane, between this and nine o'clock?"

"We'll all go out to the pump just as soon as

we're through breakfast," answered Jane soothingly. "We can accomplish consid'rable with water and force."

Rebecca nibbled her corn-cake, her tearful eyes cast on her plate and her chin quivering.

"Don't you cry and red your eyes up," chided Miranda quite kindly; "the minute you've eat enough run up and get your brush and comb and meet us at the back door."

"I would n't care myself how bad I looked," said Rebecca, "but I can't bear to be so homely that I shame the State of Maine!"

Oh, what an hour followed this plaint! Did any aspirant for literary or dramatic honors ever pass to fame through such an antechamber of horrors? Did poet of the day ever have his head so maltreated? To be dipped in the rain-water tub, soused again and again; to be held under the spout and pumped on; to be rubbed furiously with rough roller towels; to be dried with hot flannels! And is it not well-nigh incredible that at the close of such an hour the ends of the long hair should still stand out straight, the braids having been turned up two inches by Alice, and tied hard in that position with linen thread?

"Get out the skirt-board, Jane," cried Miranda, to whom opposition served as a tonic, "and move that flat-iron on to the front o' the stove. Rebecca, set down in that low chair be-

side the board, and Jane, you spread out her hair on it and cover it up with brown paper. Don't cringe, Rebecca; the worst's over, and you've borne up real good! I'll be careful not to pull your hair nor scorch you, and oh, *how* I'd like to have Alice Robinson acrost my knee and a good strip o' shingle in my right hand! There, you're all ironed out and your Aunt Jane can put on your white dress and braid your hair up again good and tight. Perhaps you won't be the hombliest of the States, after all; but when I see you comin' in to breakfast I said to myself: 'I guess if Maine looked like that, it would n't never 'a' been admitted into the Union!'"

When Uncle Sam and the stagecoach drew up to the brick house with a grand swing and a flourish, the Goddess of Liberty and most of the States were already in their places on the "harricane deck."

Words fail to describe the gallant bearing of the horses, their headstalls gayly trimmed and their harnesses dotted with little flags. The stage windows were hung in bunting, and from within beamed Columbia, looking out from the bright frame as if proud of her freight of loyal children. Patriotic streamers floated from whip, from dash-board and from rumble, and the effect of the whole was something to stimulate the most phlegmatic voter.

Rebecca came out on the steps and Aunt Jane brought a chair to assist in the ascent. Miss Dearborn peeped from the window, and gave a despairing look at her favorite.

What had happened to her? Who had dressed her? Had her head been put through a wringing-machine? Why were her eyes red and swollen? Miss Dearborn determined to take her behind the trees in the pine grove and give her some finishing touches; touches that her skillful fingers fairly itched to bestow.

The stage started, and as the roadside pageant grew gayer and gayer, Rebecca began to brighten and look prettier, for most of her beautifying came from within. The people, walking, driving, or standing on their doorsteps, cheered Uncle Sam's coach with its freight of gossamer-muslined, fluttering-ribboned girls, and just behind, the gorgeously decorated hay-cart, driven by Abijah Flagg, bearing the jolly but inharmonious fife-and-drum corps.

Was ever such a golden day! Such crystal air! Such mellow sunshine! Such a merry Uncle Sam!

The stage drew up at an appointed spot near a pine grove, and while the crowd was gathering, the children waited for the hour to arrive when they should march to the platform; the hour toward which they seemed to have been moving since the dawn of creation.

As soon as possible Miss Dearborn whispered to Rebecca: "Come behind the trees with me; I want to make you prettier!"

Rebecca thought she had suffered enough from that process already during the last twelve hours, but she put out an obedient hand and the two withdrew.

Now Miss Dearborn was, I fear, a very indifferent teacher. Dr. Moses always said so, and Libby Moses, who wanted her school, said it was a pity she had n't enjoyed more social advantages in her youth. Libby herself had taken music lessons in Portland; had spent a night at the Profile House in the White Mountains, and had visited her sister in Lowell, Massachusetts. These experiences gave her, in her own mind, and in the mind of her intimate friends, a horizon so boundless that her view of smaller, humbler matters was a trifle distorted.

Miss Dearborn's stock in trade was small, her principal virtues being devotion to children and ability to gain their love, and a power of evolving a schoolroom order so natural, cheery, serene, and peaceful that it gave the beholder a certain sense of being in a district heaven. She was poor in arithmetic and weak in geometry, but if you gave her a rose, a bit of ribbon, and a seven-by-nine looking-glass she could make herself as pretty as a pink in two minutes.

Safely sheltered behind the pines, Miss Dearborn began to practice mysterious feminine arts. She flew at Rebecca's tight braids, opened the strands and rebraided them loosely; bit and tore the red, white, and blue ribbon in two and tied the braids separately. Then with nimble fingers she pulled out little tendrils of hair behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. After a glance of acute disapproval directed at the stiff balloon skirt she knelt on the ground and gave a strenuous embrace to Rebecca's knees, murmuring, between her hugs, "Starch must be cheap at the brick house!"

This particular line of beauty attained, there ensued great pinchings of ruffles; her fingers that could never hold a ferrule nor snap children's ears being incomparable fluting-irons.

Next the sash was scornfully untied and tightened to suggest something resembling a waist. The chastened bows that had been squat, dowdy, spiritless, were given tweaks, flirts, bracing little pokes and dabs, till, acknowledging a master hand, they stood up, piquant, pert, smart, alert!

Pride of bearing was now infused into the flattened lace at the neck, and a pin (removed at some sacrifice from her own toilette) was darned in at the back to prevent any cowardly lapsing. The short white cotton gloves that called attention to the tanned wrist and arms

were stripped off and put in her own pocket. Then the wreath of pine-cones was adjusted at a heretofore unimagined angle, the hair was pulled softly into a fluffy frame, and finally, as she met Rebecca's grateful eyes she gave her two approving, triumphant kisses. In a second the sensitive face lighted into happiness; pleased dimples appeared in the cheeks, the kissed mouth was as red as a rose, and the little fright that had walked behind the pine tree stepped out on the other side Rebecca the lovely.

As to the relative value of Miss Dearborn's accomplishments, the decision must be left to the gentle reader; but though it is certain that children should be properly grounded in mathematics, no heart of flesh could bear to hear Miss Dearborn's methods vilified who had seen her patting, pulling, squeezing Rebecca from ugliness into beauty.

The young superintendent of district schools was a witness of the scene, and when later he noted the children surrounding Columbia as bees a honeysuckle, he observed to Dr. Moses: "She may not be much of a teacher, but I think she'd be considerable of a wife!" and subsequent events proved that he meant what he said!

II

Now all was ready; the moment of fate was absolutely at hand; the fife-and-drum corps led

the way and the States followed; but what actually happened Rebecca never knew; she lived through the hours in a waking dream. Every little detail was a facet of light that reflected sparkles, and among them all she was fairly dazzled. The brass band played inspiring strains; the mayor spoke eloquently on great themes; the people cheered; then the rope on which so much depended was put into the children's hands, they applied superhuman strength to their task, and the flag mounted, mounted, smoothly and slowly, and slowly unwound and stretched itself until its splendid size and beauty were revealed against the maples and pines and blue New England sky.

Then after cheers upon cheers and after a patriotic chorus by the church choirs, the State of Maine mounted the platform, vaguely conscious that she was to recite a poem, though for the life of her she could not remember a single word.

"Speak up loud and clear, Rebecky," whispered Uncle Sam in the front row, but she could scarcely hear her own voice when, tremblingly, she began her first line. After that she gathered strength and the poem "said itself," while the dream went on.

She saw Adam Ladd leaning against a tree; Aunt Jane and Aunt Miranda palpitating with nervousness; Clara Belle Simpson gazing cross-

eyed but adoring from a seat on the side; and in the far, far distance, on the very outskirts of the crowd, a tall man standing in a wagon — a tall, loose-jointed man with red upturned mustaches, and a gaunt white horse headed toward the Acreville road.

Loud applause greeted the State of Maine, the slender little white-clad figure standing on the mossy boulder that had been used as the center of the platform. The sun came up from behind a great maple and shone full on the star-spangled banner, making it more dazzling than ever, so that its beauty drew all eyes upward.

Abner Simpson lifted his vagrant shifting gaze to its softly fluttering folds and its splendid massing of colors, thinking: —

"I don't know's anybody'd ought to steal a flag — the thunderin' idjuts seem to set such store by it, and what is it, anyway? Nothin' but a sheet o' buntin'!"

Nothing but a sheet of bunting? He looked curiously at the rapt faces of the mothers, their babies asleep in their arms; the parted lips and shining eyes of the white-clad girls; at Cap'n Lord, who had been in Libby prison, and Nat Strout, who had left an arm at Bull Run; at the friendly, jostling crowd of farmers, happy, eager, absorbed, their throats ready to burst with cheers. Then the breeze served, and he heard Rebecca's clear voice saying: —

For it 's your star, my star, all the stars together,
That make our country's flag so proud
To float in the bright fall weather!

"Talk about stars! She's got a couple of 'em right in her head," thought Simpson. . . . "If I ever seen a young one like that lyin' on anybody's doorstep I'd hook her quicker'n a wink, though I've got plenty to home, the Lord knows! And I would n't swap her off neither. . . . Spunky little creeter, too; settin' up in the wagon lookin' 'bout's big as a pint o' cider, but keepin' right after the goods! . . . I vow I'm 'bout sick o' my job! Never *with* the crowd, allers *jest* on the outside, 's if I wa'n't as good's they be! If it paid well, mebbe I would n't mind, but they're so thunderin' stingy round here, they don't leave anything decent out for you to take from 'em, yet you're reskin' your liberty 'n' reputation jest the same! . . . Countin' the poor pickin's 'n' the time I lose in jail I might most's well be done with it 'n' work out by the day, as the folks want me to; I'd make 'bout's much, 'n' I don' know's it would be any harder!"

He could see Rebecca stepping down from the platform, while his own red-headed little girl stood up on her bench, waving her hat with one hand, her handkerchief with the other, and stamping with both feet.

Now a man sitting beside the mayor rose from his chair and Abner heard him call: —

"Three cheers for the women who made the flag!"

"*Hip, hip, hurrah!*"

"Three cheers for the State of Maine!"

"*Hip, hip, hurrah!*"

"Three cheers for the girl that saved the flag from the hands of the enemy!"

"*Hip, hip, hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!*"

It was the Edgewood minister, whose full, vibrant voice was of the sort to move a crowd. His words rang out into the clear air and were carried from lip to lip. Hands clapped, feet stamped, hats swung, while the loud huzzahs might almost have wakened the echoes on old Mount Ossipee.

The tall, loose-jointed man sat down in the wagon suddenly and took up the reins.

"They're gettin' a little mite personal, and I guess it's 'bout time for you to be goin', Simpson!"

The tone was jocular, but the red mustaches drooped, and the half-hearted cut he gave to start the white mare on her homeward journey showed that he was not in his usual devil-may-care mood.

"Durn his skin!" he burst out in a vindictive undertone, as the mare swung into her long gait. "It's a lie! I thought 't was somebody's wash! I hain't an enemy!"

While the crowd at the raising dispersed in

happy family groups to their picnics in the woods; while the Goddess of Liberty, Uncle Sam, Columbia, and the proud States lunched grandly in the Grange Hall with distinguished guests and scarred veterans of two wars, the lonely man drove, and drove, and drove through silent woods and dull, sleepy villages, never alighting to replenish his wardrobe or his stock of swapping material.

At dusk he reached a miserable tumble-down house on the edge of a pond.

The faithful wife with the sad mouth and the habitual look of anxiety in her faded eyes came to the door at the sound of wheels and went doggedly to the horse-shed to help him unharness.

"You did n't expect to see me back to-night, did ye?" he asked satirically; "leastwise not with this same horse? Well, I'm here! You need n't be scairt to look under the wagon-seat, there hain't nothin' there, not even my supper, so I hope you're suited for once! No, I guess I hain't goin' to be an angel right away, neither. There wa'n't nothin' but flags layin' roun' loose down Riverboro way, 'n' whatever they say, I hain't sech a hound as to steal a flag!"

It was natural that young Riverboro should have red, white, and blue dreams on the night after the new flag was raised. A stranger thing, perhaps, is the fact that Abner Simpson should

lie down on his hard bed with the flutter of bunting before his eyes, and a whirl of unaccustomed words in his mind.

For it 's your star, my star, all our stars together.

"I'm sick of goin' it alone," he thought; "I guess I'll try the other road for a spell"; and with that he fell asleep.

SEVENTH CHRONICLE

THE LITTLE PROPHET

I

I GUESS York County will never get red of that Simpson crew!" exclaimed Miranda Sawyer to Jane. "I thought when the family moved to Acreville we'd seen the last of 'em, but we ain't! The big, cross-eyed, stutterin' boy has got a place at the mills in Maplewood; that's near enough to come over to Riverboro once in a while of a Sunday mornin' and set in the meetin' house starin' at Rebecca same as he used to do, only it's reskier now both of 'em are older. Then Mrs. Fogg must go and bring back the biggest girl to help her take care of her baby, — as if there wa'n't plenty of help nearer home! Now I hear say that the youngest twin has come to stop the summer with the Cames up to Edgewood Lower Corner."

"I thought two twins were always the same age," said Rebecca reflectively, as she came into the kitchen with the milk pail.

"So they be," snapped Miranda, flushing and correcting herself. "But that pasty-faced Simpson twin looks younger and is smaller than the other one. He's meek as Moses and the

other one is as bold as a brass kettle; I don't see how they come to be twins; they ain't a mite alike."

"Elijah was always called the 'fighting twin' at school," said Rebecca, "and Elisha's other name was Namby-Pamby; but I think he's a nice little boy, and I'm glad he has come back. He won't like living with Mr. Came, but he'll be almost next door to the minister's, and Mrs. Baxter is sure to let him play in her garden."

"I wonder why the boy's stayin' with Cassius Came," said Jane. "To be sure they have n't got any of their own, but the child's too young to be much use."

"I know why," remarked Rebecca promptly, "for I heard all about it over to Watson's when I was getting the milk. Mr. Came traded something with Mr. Simpson two years ago and got the best of the bargain, and Uncle Jerry says he's the only man that ever did, and he ought to have a monument put up to him. So Mr. Came owes Mr. Simpson money and won't pay it, and Mr. Simpson said he'd send over a child and board part of it out, and take the rest in stock — a pig or a calf or something."

"That's all stuff and nonsense," exclaimed Miranda; "nothin' in the world but store-talk. You git a clump o' men-folks settin' round Watson's stove, or out on the bench at the door, an' they'll make up stories as fast as their

tongues can wag. The man don't live that's smart enough to cheat Abner Simpson in a trade, and who ever heard of anybody's owin' him money? 'T ain't supposable that a woman like Mrs. Came would allow her husband to be in debt to a man like Abner Simpson. It's a sight likelier that she heard that Mrs. Simpson was ailin' and sent for the boy so as to help the family along. She always had Mrs. Simpson to wash for her once a month, if you remember, Jane?"

There are some facts so shrouded in obscurity that the most skillful and patient investigator cannot drag them into the light of day. There are also (but only occasionally) certain motives, acts, speeches, lines of conduct, that can never be wholly and satisfactorily explained, even in a village post-office or on the loafers' bench outside the tavern door.

Cassius Came was a close man, close of mouth and close of purse; and all that Riverboro ever knew as to the three months' visit of the Simpson twin was that it actually occurred. Elisha, otherwise Namby-Pamby, came; Namby-Pamby stayed; and Namby-Pamby, when he finally rejoined his own domestic circle, did not go empty-handed (so to speak), for he was accompanied on his homeward travels by a large, red, bony, somewhat truculent cow, who was tied on behind the

wagon, and who made the journey a lively and eventful one by her total lack of desire to proceed over the road from Edgewood to Acreville. But that, the cow's tale, belongs to another time and place, and the coward's tale must come first; for Elisha Simpson was held to be sadly lacking in the manly quality of courage.

It was the new minister's wife who called Namby-Pamby the Little Prophet. His full name was Elisha Jeremiah Simpson, but one seldom heard it at full length, since, if he escaped the ignominy of Namby-Pamby, 'Lishe was quite enough for an urchin just in his first trousers and those assumed somewhat prematurely. He was "'Lishe," therefore, to the village, but the Little Prophet to the young minister's wife.

Rebecca could see the Cames' brown farmhouse from Mrs. Baxter's sitting-room window. The little-traveled road with strips of tufted green between the wheel tracks curled dustily up to the very doorstep, and inside the screen door of pink mosquito netting was a wonderful drawn-in rug, shaped like a half pie, with "Welcome" in saffron letters on a green ground.

Rebecca liked Mrs. Cassius Came, who was a friend of her Aunt Miranda's and one of the few persons who exchanged calls with that somewhat unsociable lady. The Came farm

was not a long walk from the brick house, for Rebecca could go across the fields when haying-time was over, and her delight at being sent on an errand in that direction could not be measured, now that the new minister and his wife had grown to be such a resource in her life. She liked to see Mrs. Came shake the Welcome rug, flinging the cheery word out into the summer sunshine like a bright greeting to the day. She liked to see her go to the screen door a dozen times in a morning, open it a crack and chase an imaginary fly from the sacred precincts within. She liked to see her come up the cellar steps into the side garden, appearing mysteriously as from the bowels of the earth, carrying a shining pan of milk in both hands, and disappearing through the beds of hollyhocks and sunflowers to the pig-pen or the hen-house.

Rebecca was not fond of Mr. Came, and neither was Mrs. Baxter, nor Elisha, for that matter; in fact Mr. Came was rather a difficult person to grow fond of, with his fiery red beard, his freckled skin, and his gruff way of speaking; for there were no children in the brown house to smooth the creases from his forehead or the roughness from his voice.

II

The new minister's wife was sitting under the shade of her great maple early one morning,

when she first saw the Little Prophet. A tiny figure came down the grass-grown road leading a cow by a rope. If it had been a small boy and a small cow, a middle-sized boy and an ordinary cow, or a grown man and a big cow, she might not have noticed them; but it was the combination of an infinitesimal boy and a huge cow that attracted her attention. She could not guess the child's years, she only knew that he was small for his age, whatever it was.

The cow was a dark red beast with a crumpled horn, a white star on her forehead, and a large surprised sort of eye. She had, of course, two eyes, and both were surprised, but the left one had an added hint of amazement in it by virtue of a few white hairs lurking accidentally in the center of the eyebrow.

The boy had a thin sensitive face and curly brown hair, short trousers patched on both knees, and a ragged straw hat on the back of his head. He pattered along behind the cow, sometimes holding the rope with both hands, and getting over the ground in a jerky way, as the animal left him no time to think of a smooth path for bare feet.

The Came pasture was a good half-mile distant, and the cow seemed in no hurry to reach it; accordingly she forsook the road now and then, and rambled in the hollows, where the grass was sweeter to her way of thinking. She started

on one of these exploring expeditions just as she passed the minister's great maple, and gave Mrs. Baxter time to call out to the little fellow, "Is that your cow?"

Elisha blushed and smiled, and tried to speak modestly, but there was a quiver of pride in his voice as he answered suggestively: —

"It's — nearly my cow."

"How is that?" asked Mrs. Baxter.

"Why, Mr. Came says when I drive her twenty-nine more times to pasture 'thout her gettin' her foot over the rope or 'thout my bein' afraid, she's goin' to be my truly cow. Are you 'fraid of cows?"

"Ye-e-es," Mrs. Baxter confessed, "I am, just a little. You see, I am nothing but a woman, and boys can't understand how we feel about cows."

"I can! They're awful big things, aren't they?"

"Perfectly enormous! I've always thought a cow coming towards you one of the biggest things in the world."

"Yes; me, too. Don't let's think about it. Do they hook people so very often?"

"No indeed, in fact one scarcely ever hears of such a case."

"If they stepped on your bare foot they'd scrunch it, would n't they?"

"Yes, but you are the driver; you must n't

let them do that; you are a free-will boy, and they are nothing but cows."

"I know; but p'r'aps there is free-will cows, and if they just *would* do it you could n't help being scrunched, for you must n't let go of the rope nor run, Mr. Came says."

"No, of course that would never do."

"Where you used to live did all the cows go down into the boggy places when you drove 'em to pasture, or did some walk in the road?"

"There were n't any cows or any pastures where I used to live; that's what makes me so foolish; why does your cow need a rope?"

"She don't like to go to pasture, Mr. Came says. Sometimes she'd druther stay to home, and so when she gets part way she turns round and comes backwards."

"Dear me!" thought Mrs. Baxter, "what becomes of this boy-mite if the cow has a spell of going backwards? — Do you like to drive her?" she asked.

"N-no, not erzackly; but, you see, it'll be my cow if I drive her twenty-nine more times 'thout her gettin' her foot over the rope and 'thout my bein' afraid," and a beaming smile gave a transient brightness to his harassed little face. "Will she feed in the ditch much longer?" he asked. "Shall I say 'Hurrap'? That's what Mr. Came says — '*Hurrap!*' like that, and it means to hurry up."

It was rather a feeble warning that he sounded, and the cow fed on peacefully. The little fellow looked up at the minister's wife confidingly, and then glanced back at the farm to see if Cassius Came were watching the progress of events.

"What shall we do next?" he asked.

Mrs. Baxter delighted in that warm, cozy little "*we*"; it took her into the firm so pleasantly. She was a weak prop indeed when it came to cows, but all the courage in her soul rose to arms when Elisha said, "What shall *we* do next?" She became alert, ingenious, strong, on the instant.

"What is the cow's name?" she asked, sitting up straight in the swing-chair.

"Buttercup; but she don't seem to know it very well. She ain't a mite like a buttercup."

"Never mind; you must shout 'Buttercup!' at the top of your voice, and twitch the rope *hard;* then I'll call, 'Hurrap!' with all my might at the same moment. And if she starts quickly we must n't run nor seem frightened!"

They did this; it worked to a charm, and Mrs. Baxter looked affectionately after her Little Prophet as the cow pulled him down Tory Hill.

The lovely August days wore on. Rebecca was often at the parsonage and saw Elisha frequently, but Buttercup was seldom present at

their interviews, as the boy now drove her to the pasture very early in the morning, the journey thither being one of considerable length and her method of reaching the goal being exceedingly roundabout.

Mr. Came had pointed out the necessity of getting her into the pasture at least a few minutes before she had to be taken out again at night, and though Rebecca did n't like Mr. Came, she saw the common sense of this remark. Sometimes Mrs. Baxter and Rebecca caught a glimpse of the two at sundown, as they returned from the pasture to the twilight milking, Buttercup chewing her peaceful cud, her soft white bag of milk hanging full, her surprised eye rolling in its accustomed "fine frenzy." The frenzied roll did not mean anything, they used to assure Elisha; but if it did n't, it was an awful pity she had to do it, Rebecca thought; and Mrs. Baxter agreed. To have an expression of eye that meant murder, and yet to be a perfectly virtuous and well-meaning animal, this was a calamity indeed.

Mrs. Baxter was looking at the sun one evening as it dropped like a ball of red fire into Wilkins's Woods, when the Little Prophet passed.

"It's the twenty-ninth night," he called joyously.

"I am so glad," she answered, for she had often feared some accident might prevent his

claiming the promised reward. "Then tomorrow Buttercup will be your own cow?"

"I guess so. That's what Mr. Came said. He's off to Acreville now, but he'll be home tonight, and father's going to send my new hat by him. When Buttercup's my own cow I wish I could change her name and call her Red Rover, but p'r'aps her mother would n't like it. When she b'longs to me, mebbe I won't be so 'fraid of gettin' hooked and scrunched, because she'll know she's mine, and she'll go better. I haven't let her get snarled up in the rope one single time, and I don't show I'm afraid, do I?"

"I should never suspect it for an instant," said Mrs. Baxter encouragingly. "I've often envied you your bold, brave look!"

Elisha appeared distinctly pleased. "I haven't cried, either, when she's dragged me over the pasture bars and peeled my legs. Bill Peters's little brother Charlie says he ain't afraid of anything, not even bears. He says he would walk right up close and cuff 'em if they dared to yip; but I ain't like that! He ain't scared of elephants or tigers or lions either; he says they're all the same as frogs or chickens to him!"

Rebecca told her Aunt Miranda that evening that it was the Prophet's twenty-ninth night, and that the big red cow was to be his on the morrow.

"Well, I hope it'll turn out that way," she said. "But I ain't a mite sure that Cassius Came will give up that cow when it comes to the point. It won't be the first time he's tried to crawl out of a bargain with folks a good deal bigger than 'Lisha, for he's terrible close, Cassius is. To be sure he's stiff in his joints and he's glad enough to have a boy to take the cow to the pasture in summer-time, but he always has hired help when it comes harvestin'. So 'Lisha 'll be no use from this on; and I dare say the cow is Abner Simpson's anyway. If you want a walk to-night, I wish you'd go up there and ask Mis' Came if she'll lend me an' your Aunt Jane half her yeast-cake. Tell her we'll pay it back when we get ours a Saturday. Don't you want to take Thirza Meserve with you? She's alone as usual while Huldy's entertainin' beaux on the side porch. Don't stay too long at the parsonage!"

III

Rebecca was used to this sort of errand, for the whole village of Riverboro would sometimes be rocked to the very center of its being by simultaneous desire for a yeast-cake. As the nearest repository was a mile and a half distant, as the yeast-cake was valued at two cents and would n't keep, as the demand was uncertain, being dependent entirely on a fluctuating

desire for "riz bread," the storekeeper refused to order more than three yeast-cakes a day at his own risk. Sometimes they remained on his hands a dead loss; sometimes eight or ten persons would "hitch up" and drive from distant farms for the coveted article, only to be met with the fiat, "No, I'm all out o' yeast-cake; Mis' Simmons took the last; mebbe you can borry half o' hern, she hain't much of a bread-eater."

So Rebecca climbed the hills to Mrs. Came's, knowing that her daily bread depended on the successful issue of the call.

Thirza was barefooted, and tough as her little feet were, the long walk over the stubble fields tired her. When they came within sight of the Came barn, she coaxed Rebecca to take a short cut through the turnips growing in long, beautifully weeded rows.

"You know Mr. Came is awfully cross, Thirza, and can't bear anybody to tread on his crops or touch a tree or a bush that belongs to him. I'm kind of afraid, but come along and mind you step softly in between the rows and hold up your petticoat, so you can't possibly touch the turnip plants. I'll do the same. Skip along fast, because then we won't leave any deep footprints."

The children passed safely and noiselessly along, their pleasure a trifle enhanced by the

felt dangers of their progress. Rebecca knew that they were doing no harm, but that did not prevent her hoping to escape the gimlet eye of Mr. Came.

As they neared the outer edge of the turnip patch they paused suddenly, petticoats in air.

A great clump of elderberry bushes hid them from the barn, but from the other side of the clump came the sound of conversation: the timid voice of the Little Prophet and the gruff tones of Cassius Came.

Rebecca was afraid to interrupt, and too honest to wish to overhear. She could only hope the man and the boy would pass on to the house as they talked, so she motioned to the paralyzed Thirza to take two more steps and stand with her behind the elderberry bushes. But no! in a moment they heard Mr. Came drag a stool over beside the grindstone as he said: —

"Well, now, Elisha Jeremiah, we'll talk about the red cow. You say you've drove her a month, do ye? And the trade between us was that if you could drive her a month, without her getting the rope over her foot and without bein' afraid, you was to have her. That's straight, ain't it?"

The Prophet's face burned with excitement, his gingham shirt rose and fell as if he were breathing hard, but he only nodded assent and said nothing.

"Now," continued Mr. Came, "have you made out to keep the rope from under her feet?"

"She ain't got t-t-tangled up one s-single time," said Elisha, stuttering in his excitement, but looking up with some courage from his bare toes, with which he was assiduously threading the grass.

"So far, so good. Now 'bout bein' afraid. As you seem so certain of gettin' the cow, I suppose you hain't been a speck scared, hev you? Honor bright, now!"

"I — I — not but just a little mite. I" —

"Hold up a minute. Of course you did n't *say* you was afraid, and did n't *show* you was afraid, and nobody knew you *was* afraid, but that ain't the way we fixed it up. You was to call the cow your 'n if you could drive her to the pasture for a month without *bein'* afraid. Own up square now, hev you be'n afraid?"

A long pause, then a faint, "Yes."

"Where's your manners?"

"I mean yes, sir."

"How often? If it hain't be'n too many times mebbe I'll let ye off, though you're a reg'lar girl-boy, and'll be runnin' away from the cat bimeby. Has it be'n — twice?"

"Yes," and the Little Prophet's voice was very faint now, and had a decided tear in it.

"Yes what?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has it be'n four times?"

"Y-es, sir." More heaving of the gingham shirt.

"Well, you *air* a thunderin' coward! How many times? Speak up now."

More digging of the bare toes in the earth, and one premonitory tear drop stealing from under the downcast lids, then, —

"A little, most every day, and you can keep the cow," wailed the Prophet, as he turned abruptly and fled behind the shed, where he flung himself into the green depths of a tansy bed, and gave himself up to unmanly sobs.

Cassius Came gave a sort of shamefaced guffaw at the abrupt departure of the boy, and went on into the house, while Rebecca and Thirza made a stealthy circuit of the barn and a polite and circumspect entrance through the parsonage front gate.

Rebecca told the minister's wife what she could remember of the interview between Cassius Came and Elisha Simpson, and tender-hearted Mrs. Baxter longed to seek and comfort her Little Prophet sobbing in the tansy bed, the brand of coward on his forehead, and what was much worse, the fear in his heart that he deserved it.

Rebecca could hardly be prevented from bearding Mr. Came and openly espousing the cause of Elisha, for she was an impetuous, reck-

less, valiant creature when a weaker vessel was attacked or threatened unjustly.

Mrs. Baxter acknowledged that Mr. Came had been true, in a way, to his word and bargain, but she confessed that she had never heard of so cruel and hard a bargain since the days of Shylock, and it was all the worse for being made with a child.

Rebecca hurried home, her visit quite spoiled and her errand quite forgotten till she reached the brick-house door, where she told her aunts, with her customary picturesqueness of speech, that she would rather eat buttermilk bread till she died than partake of food mixed with one of Mr. Came's yeast-cakes; that it would choke her, even in the shape of good raised bread.

"That's all very fine, Rebecky," said her Aunt Miranda, who had a pin-prick for almost every bubble; "but don't forget there's two other mouths to feed in this house, and you might at least give your aunt and me the privilege of chokin' if we feel to want to!"

IV

Mrs. Baxter finally heard from Mrs. Came, through whom all information was sure to filter if you gave it time, that her husband despised a coward, that he considered Elisha a regular mother's-apron-string boy, and that he was "learnin'" him to be brave.

Bill Peters, the hired man, now drove Buttercup to pasture, though whenever Mr. Came went to Moderation or Bonnie Eagle, as he often did, Mrs. Baxter noticed that Elisha took the hired man's place. She often joined him on these anxious expeditions, and, a like terror in both their souls, they attempted to train the red cow and give her some idea of obedience.

"If she only would n't look at us that way we would get along real nicely with her, would n't we?" prattled the Prophet, straggling along by her side; "and she is a splendid cow; she gives twenty-one quarts a day, and Mr. Came says it's more 'n half cream."

The minister's wife assented to all this, thinking that if Buttercup would give up her habit of turning completely round in the road to roll her eyes and elevate her white-tipped eyebrow, she might indeed be an enjoyable companion; but in her present state of development her society was not agreeable, even did she give sixty-one quarts of milk a day. Furthermore, when Mrs. Baxter discovered that she never did any of these reprehensible things with Bill Peters, she began to believe cows more intelligent creatures than she had supposed them to be, and she was indignant to think Buttercup could count so confidently on the weakness of a small boy and a timid woman.

One evening, when Buttercup was more than

usually exasperating, Mrs. Baxter said to the Prophet, who was bracing himself to keep from being pulled into a wayside brook where Buttercup loved to dabble, "Elisha, do you know anything about the superiority of mind over matter?"

No, he did n't, though it was not a fair time to ask the question, for he had sat down in the road to get a better purchase on the rope.

"Well, it does n't signify. What I mean is that we can die but once, and it is a glorious thing to die for a great principle. Give me that rope. I can pull like an ox in my present frame of mind. You run down on the opposite side of the brook, take that big stick, wade right in, — you are barefooted, — brandish the stick, and, if necessary, do more than brandish. I would go myself, but it is better she should recognize you as her master, and I am in as much danger as you are, anyway. She may try to hook you, of course, but you must keep waving the stick, — die brandishing, Prophet, that's the idea! She may turn and run for me, in which case I shall run too; but I shall die running, and the minister can bury us under our favorite sweet-apple tree!"

The Prophet's soul was fired by the lovely lady's eloquence. Their spirits mounted simultaneously, and they were flushed with a splendid courage in which death looked a mean and

paltry thing compared with vanquishing that cow. She had already stepped into the pool, but the Prophet waded in towards her, moving the alder branch menacingly. She looked up with the familiar roll of the eye that had done her such good service all summer, but she quailed beneath the stern justice and the new valor of the Prophet's gaze.

In that moment perhaps she felt ashamed of the misery she had caused the helpless mite. At any rate, actuated by fear, surprise, or remorse, she turned and walked back into the road without a sign of passion or indignation, leaving the boy and the lady rather disappointed at their easy victory. To be prepared for a violent death and receive not even a scratch made them fear that they might possibly have overestimated the danger.

They were better friends than ever after that, the young minister's wife and the forlorn little boy from Acreville, sent away from home he knew not why, unless it were that there was little to eat there and considerably more at the Cash Cames', as they were called in Edgewood. Cassius was familiarly known as Uncle Cash, partly because there was a disposition in Edgewood to abbreviate all Christian names, and partly because the old man paid cash, and expected to be paid cash, for everything.

The late summer grew into autumn, and the

minister's great maple flung a flaming bough of scarlet over Mrs. Baxter's swing-chair. Uncle Cash found Elisha very useful at picking up potatoes and apples, but the boy was going back to his family as soon as the harvesting was over.

One Friday evening Mrs. Baxter and Rebecca, wrapped in shawls and "fascinators," were sitting on Mrs. Came's front steps enjoying the sunset. Rebecca was in a tremulous state of happiness, for she had come directly from the Seminary at Wareham to the parsonage, and as the minister was absent at a church conference, she was to stay the night with Mrs. Baxter and go with her to Portland next day.

They were to go to the Islands, have ice cream for luncheon, ride on a horse-car, and walk by the Longfellow house, a programme that so unsettled Rebecca's never very steady mind that she radiated flashes and sparkles of joy, making Mrs. Baxter wonder if flesh could be translucent, enabling the spirit-fires within to shine through?

Buttercup was being milked on the grassy slope near the shed door. As she walked to the barn, after giving up her pailfuls of yellow milk, she bent her neck and snatched a hasty bite from a pile of turnips lying temptingly near. In her haste she took more of a mouth-

ful than would be considered good manners even among cows, and as she disappeared in the barn door they could see a forest of green tops hanging from her mouth, while she painfully attempted to grind up the mass of stolen material without allowing a single turnip to escape.

It grew dark soon afterward and they went into the house to see Mrs. Came's new lamp lighted for the first time, to examine her last drawn-in rug (a wonderful achievement produced entirely from dyed flannel petticoats), and to hear the doctor's wife play "Oft in the Stilly Night," on the dulcimer.

As they closed the sitting-room door opening on the piazza facing the barn, the women heard the cow coughing and said to one another: "Buttercup was too greedy, and now she has indigestion."

Elisha always went to bed at sundown, and Uncle Cash had gone to the doctor's to have his hand dressed, for he had hurt it in some way in the threshing-machine. Bill Peters, the hired man, came in presently and asked for him, saying that the cow coughed more and more, and it must be that something was wrong, but he could not get her to open her mouth wide enough for him to see anything. "She'd up an' die ruther'n obleege anybody, that tarnal ugly cow would!" he said.

When Uncle Cash had driven into the yard, he came in for a lantern, and went directly out to the barn. After a half-hour or so, in which the little party had forgotten the whole occurrence, he came in again.

"I'm blamed if we ain't goin' to lose that cow," he said. "Come out, will ye, Hannah, and hold the lantern? I can't do anything with my right hand in a sling, and Bill is the stupidest critter in the country."

Everybody went out to the barn accordingly, except the doctor's wife, who ran over to her house to see if her brother Moses had come home from Milltown, and could come and take a hand in the exercises.

Buttercup was in a bad way; there was no doubt of it. Something, one of the turnips, presumably, had lodged in her throat, and would move neither way, despite her attempts to dislodge it. Her breathing was labored, and her eyes bloodshot from straining and choking. Once or twice they succeeded in getting her mouth partly open, but before they could fairly discover the cause of trouble she had wrested her head away.

"I can see a little tuft of green sticking straight up in the middle," said Uncle Cash, while Bill Peters and Moses held a lantern on each side of Buttercup's head; "but, land! it's so far down, and such a mite of a thing, I

could n't git it, even if I could use my right hand. S'pose you try, Bill."

Bill hemmed and hawed, and confessed he did n't care to try. Buttercup's grinders were of good size and excellent quality, and he had no fancy for leaving his hand within her jaws. He said he was no good at that kind of work, but that he would help Uncle Cash hold the cow's head; that was just as necessary, and considerable safer.

Moses was more inclined to the service of humanity, and did his best, wrapping his wrist in a cloth, and making desperate but ineffectual dabs at the slippery green turnip-tops in the reluctantly opened throat. But the cow tossed her head and stamped her feet and switched her tail and wriggled from under Bill's hands, so that it seemed altogether impossible to reach the seat of the trouble.

Uncle Cash was in despair, fuming and fretting the more because of his own crippled hand.

"Hitch up, Bill," he said, "and, Hannah, you drive over to Milliken's Mills for the horse-doctor. I know we can git out that turnip if we can hit on the right tools and somebody to manage 'em right; but we've got to be quick about it or the critter'll choke to death, sure! Your hand's so clumsy, Mose, she thinks her time's come when she feels it in her mouth, and

your fingers are so big you can't ketch holt o' that green stuff 'thout its slippin'!"

"Mine ain't big; let me try," said a timid voice, and turning round, they saw little Elisha Simpson, his trousers pulled on over his night-shirt, his curly hair ruffled, his eyes vague with sleep.

Uncle Cash gave a laugh of good-humored derision. "You — that's afraid to drive a cow to pasture? No, sir; you hain't got sand enough for this job, I guess!"

Buttercup just then gave a worse cough than ever, and her eyes rolled in her head as if she were giving up the ghost.

"I'd rather do it than see her choke to death!" cried the boy, in despair.

"Then, by ginger, you can try it, sonny!" said Uncle Cash. "Now this time we'll tie her head up. Take it slow, and make a good job of it."

Accordingly they pried poor Buttercup's jaws open to put a wooden gag between them, tied her head up, and kept her as still as they could, while the women held the lanterns.

"Now, sonny, strip up your sleeve and reach as fur down's you can! Wind your little fingers in among that green stuff stickin' up there that ain't hardly big enough to call green stuff, give it a twist, and pull for all you're worth. Land! what a skinny little pipe stem!"

The Little Prophet had stripped up his sleeve. It was a slender thing, his arm; but he had driven the red cow all summer, borne her tantrums, protected her from the consequences of her own obstinacy, taking (as he thought) a future owner's pride in her splendid flow of milk — grown fond of her, in a word, and now she was choking to death. A skinny little pipe stem is capable of a deal at such a time, and only a slender hand and arm could have done the work.

Elisha trembled with nervousness, but he made a dexterous and dashing entrance into the awful cavern of Buttercup's mouth; descended upon the tiny clump of green spills or spikes, wound his little fingers in among them as firmly as he could, and then gave a long, steady, determined pull with all the strength in his body. That was not so much in itself, to be sure, but he borrowed a good deal more from some reserve quarter, the location of which nobody knows anything about, but upon which everybody draws in time of need.

Such a valiant pull you would never have expected of the Little Prophet. Such a pull it was that, to his own utter amazement, he suddenly found himself lying flat on his back on the barn floor with a very slippery something in his hand, and a fair-sized but rather dilapidated turnip at the end of it.

"That's the business!" cried Moses.

"I could 'a' done it as easy as nothin' if my arm had been a leetle mite smaller," said Bill Peters.

"You're a trump, sonny!" exclaimed Uncle Cash, as he helped Moses untie Buttercup's head and took the gag out.

"You're a trump, 'Lisha, and, by ginger, the cow's your'n; only don't you let your blesséd pa drink none of her cream!"

The welcome air rushed into Buttercup's lungs and cooled her parched, torn throat. She was pretty nearly spent, poor thing, and bent her head (rather gently for her) over the Little Prophet's shoulder as he threw his arms joyfully about her neck, and whispered, "You're my truly cow now, ain't you, Buttercup?"

"Mrs. Baxter, dear," said Rebecca, as they walked home to the parsonage together under the young harvest moon; "there are all sorts of cowards, aren't there, and don't you think Elisha is one of the best kind?"

"I don't quite know what to think about cowards, Rebecca Rowena," said the minister's wife hesitatingly. "The Little Prophet is the third coward I have known in my short life who turned out to be a hero when the real testing time came. Meanwhile the heroes themselves — or the ones that were taken for heroes — were always busy doing something, or being somewhere, else."

EIGHTH CHRONICLE

ABNER SIMPSON'S NEW LEAF

I

REBECCA had now cut the bonds that bound her to the Riverboro district school, and had been for a week a full-fledged pupil at the Wareham Seminary, towards which goal she had been speeding ever since the memorable day when she rode into Riverboro on the top of Uncle Jerry Cobb's stagecoach, and told him that education was intended to be "the making of her."

She went to and fro, with Emma Jane and the other Riverboro boys and girls, on the morning and evening trains that ran between the academy town and Milliken's Mills.

The six days had passed like a dream! — a dream in which she sat in corners with her eyes cast down; flushed whenever she was addressed; stammered whenever she answered a question, and nearly died of heart failure when subjected to an examination of any sort. She delighted the committee when reading at sight from "King Lear," but somewhat discouraged them when she could not tell the capital of the United States. She admitted that her former

teacher, Miss Dearborn, might have mentioned it, but if so she had not remembered it.

In these first weeks among strangers she passed for nothing but an interesting-looking, timid, innocent, country child, never revealing, even to the far-seeing Emily Maxwell, a hint of her originality, facility, or power in any direction. Rebecca was fourteen, but so slight, and under the paralyzing new conditions so shy, that she would have been mistaken for twelve had it not been for her general advancement in the school curriculum.

Growing up in the solitude of a remote farmhouse, transplanted to a tiny village where she lived with two elderly spinsters, she was still the veriest child in all but the practical duties and responsibilities of life; in those she had long been a woman.

It was Saturday afternoon; her lessons for Monday were all learned and she burst into the brick-house sitting-room with the flushed face and embarrassed mien that always foreshadowed a request. Requests were more commonly answered in the negative than in the affirmative at the brick house, a fact that accounted for the slight confusion in her demeanor.

"Aunt Miranda," she began, "the fishman says that Clara Belle Simpson wants to see me very much, but Mrs. Fogg can't spare her long

at a time, you know, on account of the baby being no better; but Clara Belle could walk a mile up, and I a mile down the road, and we could meet at the pink house halfway. Then we could rest and talk an hour or so, and both be back in time for our suppers. I've fed the cat; she had no appetite, as it's only two o'clock and she had her dinner at noon, but she'll go back to her saucer, and it's off my mind. I could go down cellar now and bring up the cookies and the pie and doughnuts for supper before I start. Aunt Jane saw no objection; but we thought I'd better ask you so as to run no risks."

Miranda Sawyer, who had been patiently waiting for the end of this speech, laid down her knitting and raised her eyes with a half-resigned expression that meant: Is there anything unusual in heaven or earth or the waters under the earth that this child does not want to do? Will she ever settle down to plain, comprehensible Sawyer ways, or will she to the end make these sudden and radical propositions, suggesting at every turn the irresponsible Randall ancestry?

"You know well enough, Rebecca, that I don't like you to be intimate with Abner Simpson's young ones," she said decisively. "They ain't fit company for anybody that's got Sawyer blood in their veins, if it's ever so

little. I don't know, I'm sure, how you're goin' to turn out! The fish peddler seems to be your best friend, without it's Abijah Flagg that you're everlastingly talkin' to lately. I should think you'd rather read some improvin' book than to be chatterin' with Squire Bean's chore-boy!"

"He is n't always going to be a chore-boy," explained Rebecca, "and that's what we're considering. It's his career we talk about, and he has n't got any father or mother to advise him. Besides, Clara Belle kind of belongs to the village now that she lives with Mrs. Fogg; and she was always the best behaved of all the girls, either in school or Sunday-School. Children can't help having fathers!"

"Everybody says Abner is turning over a new leaf, and if so, the family'd ought to be encouraged every possible way," said Miss Jane, entering the room with her mending basket in hand.

"If Abner Simpson is turnin' over a leaf, or anythin' else in creation, it's only to see what's on the under side!" remarked Miss Miranda promptly. "Don't talk to me about new leaves! You can't change that kind of a man; he is what he is, and you can't make him no different!"

"The grace of God can do consid'rable," observed Jane piously.

"I ain't sayin' but it can if it sets out, but it has to begin early and stay late on a man like Simpson."

"Now, Mirandy, Abner ain't more'n forty! I don't know what the average age for repentance is in men-folks, but when you think of what an awful sight of 'em leaves it to their deathbeds, forty seems real kind of young. Not that I've heard Abner has experienced religion, but everybody's surprised at the good way he's conductin' this fall."

"They'll be surprised the other way round when they come to miss their firewood and apples and potatoes again," affirmed Miranda.

"Clara Belle don't seem to have inherited from her father," Jane ventured again timidly. "No wonder Mrs. Fogg sets such store by the girl. If it had n't been for her, the baby would have been dead by now."

"Perhaps tryin' to save it was interferin' with the Lord's will," was Miranda's retort.

"Folks can't stop to figure out just what's the Lord's will when a child has upset a kettle of scalding water on to himself," and as she spoke Jane darned more excitedly. "Mrs. Fogg knows well enough she had n't ought to have left that baby alone in the kitchen with the stove, even if she did see Clara Belle comin' across lots. She'd ought to have waited before drivin' off; but of course she was afraid of miss-

ing the train, and she's too good a woman to be held accountable."

"The minister's wife says Clara Belle is a real — I can't think of the word!" chimed in Rebecca. "What's the female of hero? Whatever it is, that's what Mrs. Baxter called her!"

"Clara Belle's the female of Simpson; that's what she is," Miss Miranda asserted: "but she's been brought up to use her wits, and I ain't sayin' but she used 'em."

"I should say she did!" exclaimed Miss Jane; "to put that screaming, suffering child in the baby-carriage and run all the way to the doctor's when there was n't a soul on hand to advise her! Two or three more such actions would make the Simpson name sound consid'rable sweeter in this neighborhood."

"Simpson will always sound like Simpson to me!" vouchsafed the elder sister, "but we've talked enough about 'em an' to spare. You can go along, Rebecca; but remember that a child is known by the company she keeps."

"All right, Aunt Miranda; thank you!" cried Rebecca, leaping from the chair on which she had been twisting nervously for five minutes. "And how does this strike you? Would you be in favor of my taking Clara Belle a company-tart?"

"Don't Mrs. Fogg feed the young one, now she's taken her right into the family?"

"Oh, yes," Rebecca answered, "she has lovely things to eat, and Mrs. Fogg won't even let her drink skim milk; but I always feel that taking a present lets the person know you've been thinking about them and are extra glad to see them. Besides, unless we have company soon, those tarts will have to be eaten by the family, and a new batch made; you remember the one I had when I was rewarding myself last week? That was queer — but nice," she added hastily.

"Mebbe you could think of something of your own you could give away without taking my tarts!" responded Miranda tersely; the joints of her armor having been pierced by the fatally keen tongue of her niece, who had insinuated that company-tarts lasted a long time in the brick house. This was a fact; indeed, the company-tart was so named, not from any idea that it would ever be eaten by guests, but because it was too good for every-day use.

Rebecca's face crimsoned with shame that she had drifted into an impolite and, what was worse, an apparently ungrateful speech.

"I did n't mean to say anything not nice, Aunt Miranda," she stammered. "Truly the tart was splendid, but not exactly like new, that's all. And oh! I know what I can take Clara Belle! A few chocolate drops out of the box Mr. Ladd gave me on my birthday."

"You go down cellar and get that tart, same as I told you," commanded Miranda, "and when you fill it don't uncover a new tumbler of jelly; there's some dried-apple preserves open that'll do. Wear your rubbers and your thick jacket. After runnin' all the way down there — for your legs never seem to be rigged for walkin' like other girls' — you'll set down on some damp stone or other and ketch your death o' cold, an' your Aunt Jane 'n' I'll be kep' up nights nursin' you and luggin' your meals upstairs to you on a waiter."

Here Miranda leaned her head against the back of her rocking-chair, dropped her knitting and closed her eyes wearily; for when the immovable body is opposed by the irresistible force there is a certain amount of jar and disturbance involved in the operation.

Rebecca moved toward the side door, shooting a questioning glance at Aunt Jane as she passed. The look was full of mysterious suggestion and was accompanied by an almost imperceptible gesture. Miss Jane knew that certain articles were kept in the entry closet, and by this time she had become sufficiently expert in telegraphy to know that Rebecca's unspoken query meant: "*Could you permit the hat with the red wings, it being Saturday, fine settled weather, and a pleasure excursion?*"

These confidential requests, though fraught

with embarrassment when Miranda was in the room, gave Jane much secret joy; there was something about them that stirred her spinster heart — they were so gay, so appealing, so un-Sawyer-, un-Riverboro-like. The longer Rebecca lived in the brick house the more her Aunt Jane marveled at the child. What made her so different from everybody else. Could it be that her graceless popinjay of a father, Lorenzo de Medici Randall, had bequeathed her some strange combination of gifts instead of fortune? Her eyes, her brows, the color of her lips, the shape of her face, as well as her ways and words, proclaimed her a changeling in the Sawyer tribe; but what an enchanting changeling; bringing wit and nonsense and color and delight into the gray monotony of the dragging years!

There was frost in the air, but a bright, cheery sun, as Rebecca walked decorously out of the brick-house yard. Emma Jane Perkins was away over Sunday on a visit to a cousin in Moderation; Alice Robinson and Candace Milliken were having measles, and Riverboro was very quiet. Still, life was seldom anything but a gay adventure to Rebecca, and she started afresh every morning to its conquest. She was not exacting; the Asmodean feat of spinning a sand heap into twine was, poetically speaking, always in her power, so the mile walk

to the pink-house gate, and the tryst with freckled, red-haired Clara Belle Simpson, whose face Miss Miranda said looked like a raw pie in a brick oven, these commonplace incidents were sufficiently exhilarating to brighten her eye and quicken her step.

As the great bare horse-chestnut near the pink-house gate loomed into view, the red linsey-woolsey speck going down the road spied the blue linsey-woolsey speck coming up, and both specks flew over the intervening distance and, meeting, embraced each other ardently, somewhat to the injury of the company-tart.

"Did n't it come out splendidly?" exclaimed Rebecca. "I was so afraid the fishman would n't tell you to start exactly at two, or that one of us would walk faster than the other; but we met at the very spot! It was a very uncommon idea, was n't it? Almost romantic!"

"And what do you think?" asked Clara Belle proudly. "Look at this! Mrs. Fogg lent me her watch to come home by!"

"Oh, Clara Belle, how wonderful! Mrs. Fogg gets kinder and kinder to you, does n't she? You 're not homesick any more, are you?"

"No-o; not really; only when I remember there 's only little Susan to manage the twins: though they 're getting on real well without me. But I kind of think, Rebecca, that I 'm going to be given away to the Foggs for good."

"Do you mean adopted?"

"Yes; I think father's going to sign papers. You see we can't tell how many years it'll be before the poor baby outgrows its burns, and Mrs. Fogg'll never be the same again, and she must have somebody to help her."

"You'll be their real daughter, then, won't you, Clara Belle? And Mr. Fogg is a deacon, and a selectman, and a road commissioner, and everything splendid."

"Yes; I'll have board, and clothes, and school, and be named Fogg, and" (here her voice sank to an awed whisper) "the upper farm if I should ever get married; Miss Dearborn told me that herself, when she was persuading me not to mind being given away."

"Clara Belle Simpson!" exclaimed Rebecca in a transport. "Who'd have thought you'd be a female hero and an heiress besides? It's just like a book story, and it happened in Riverboro. I'll make Uncle Jerry Cobb allow there *can* be Riverboro stories, you see if I don't."

"Of course I know it's all right," Clara Belle replied soberly. "I'll have a good home and father can't keep us all; but it's kind of dreadful to be given away, like a piano or a horse and carriage!"

Rebecca's hand went out sympathetically to Clara Belle's freckled paw. Suddenly her own face clouded and she whispered: —

"I'm not sure, Clara Belle, but I'm given away too — do you s'pose I am? Poor father left us in debt, you see. I thought I came away from Sunnybrook to get an education and then help pay off the mortgage; but mother does n't say anything about my coming back, and our family's one of those too-big ones, you know, just like yours."

"Did your mother sign papers to your aunts?"

"If she did I never heard anything about it; but there's something pinned on to the mortgage that mother keeps in the drawer of the bookcase."

"You'd know it if 't was adoption papers; I guess you're just lent," Clara Belle said cheeringly. "I don't believe anybody'd ever give *you* away! And, oh! Rebecca, father's getting on so well! He works on Daly's farm where they raise lots of horses and cattle, too, and he breaks all the young colts and trains them, and swaps off the poor ones, and drives all over the country. Daly told Mr. Fogg he was splendid with stock, and father says it's just like play. He's sent home money three Saturday nights."

"I'm so glad!" exclaimed Rebecca sympathetically. "Now your mother'll have a good time and a black silk dress, won't she?"

"I don't know," sighed Clara Belle, and her

voice was grave. "Ever since I can remember she's just washed and cried and cried and washed. Miss Dearborn has been spending her vacation up to Acreville, you know, and she came yesterday to board next door to Mrs. Fogg's. I heard them talking last night when I was getting the baby to sleep — I could n't help it, they were so close — and Miss Dearborn said mother does n't like Acreville; she says nobody takes any notice of her, and they don't give her any more work. Mrs. Fogg said, well, they were dreadful stiff and particular up that way and they liked women to have wedding-rings."

"Has n't your mother got a wedding-ring?" asked Rebecca, astonished. "Why, I thought everybody *had* to have them, just as they do sofas and a kitchen stove!"

"I never noticed she did n't have one, but when they spoke I remembered mother's hands washing and wringing, and she does n't wear one, I know. She has n't got any jewelry, not even a breast-pin."

"Well," and Rebecca's tone was somewhat censorious, "your father's been so poor perhaps he could n't afford breast-pins, but I should have thought he'd have given your mother a wedding-ring when they were married; that's the time to do it, right at the very first."

"They did n't have any real church dress-up

wedding," explained Clara Belle extenuatingly. "You see the first mother, mine, had the big boys and me, and then she died when we were little. Then after a while this mother came to housekeep, and she stayed, and by and by she was Mrs. Simpson, and Susan and the twins and the baby are hers, and she and father did n't have time for a regular wedding in church. They don't have veils and bridesmaids and refreshments round here like Miss Dearborn's sister did."

"Do they cost a great deal — wedding-rings?" asked Rebecca thoughtfully. "They're solid gold, so I s'pose they do. If they were cheap we might buy one. I've got seventy-four cents saved up; how much have you?"

"Fifty-three," Clara Belle responded, in a depressing tone; "and anyway there are no stores nearer than Milltown. We'd have to buy it secretly, for I would n't make father angry, or shame his pride, now he's got steady work; and mother would know I had spent all my savings."

Rebecca looked nonplussed. "I declare," she said, "I think the Acreville people must be perfectly horrid not to call on your mother only because she has n't got any jewelry. You would n't dare tell your father what Miss Dearborn heard, so he'd save up and buy the ring?"

"No; I certainly would not!" and Clara Belle's lips closed tightly and decisively.

Rebecca sat quietly for a few moments, then she exclaimed jubilantly: "I know where we could get it! From Mr. Aladdin, and then I need n't tell him who it's for! He's coming to stay over to-morrow with his aunt, and I'll ask him to buy a ring for us in Boston. I won't explain anything, you know; I'll just say I need a wedding-ring."

"That would be perfectly lovely," replied Clara Belle, a look of hope dawning in her eyes; "and we can think afterwards how to get it over to mother. Perhaps you could send it to father instead, but I would n't dare to do it myself. You won't tell anybody, Rebecca?"

"Cross my heart!" Rebecca exclaimed dramatically; and then with a reproachful look, "you know I could n't repeat a sacred secret like that! Shall we meet next Saturday afternoon, and I tell you what's happened? — Why, Clara Belle, is n't that Mr. Ladd watering his horse at the foot of the hill this very minute? It is; and he's driven up from Milltown 'stead of coming on the train from Boston to Edgewood. He's all alone, and I can ride home with him and ask him about the ring right away!"

Clara Belle kissed Rebecca fervently, and started on her homeward walk, while Rebecca

"I'll just say I need a wedding-ring"

F.C. YOHN

waited at the top of the long hill, fluttering her handkerchief as a signal.

"Mr. Aladdin! Mr. Aladdin!" she cried, as the horse and wagon came nearer.

Adam Ladd drew up quickly at the sound of the eager young voice.

"Well, well; here is Rebecca Rowena fluttering along the highroad like a red-winged blackbird! Are you going to fly home, or drive with me?"

Rebecca clambered into the carriage, laughing and blushing with delight at his nonsense and with joy at seeing him again.

"Clara Belle and I were just talking about you this minute, and I'm so glad you came this way, for there's something very important to ask you about," she began, rather breathlessly.

"No doubt," laughed Adam Ladd, who had become, in the course of his acquaintance with Rebecca, a sort of high court of appeals; "I hope the premium banquet lamp does n't smoke as it grows older?"

"Now, Mr. Aladdin, you *will* not remember nicely. Mr. Simpson swapped off the banquet lamp when he was moving the family to Acreville; it's not the lamp at all, but once, when you were here last time, you said you'd make up your mind what you were going to give me for Christmas."

"I do remember that much quite nicely."

"Well, is it bought?"

"No, I never buy Christmas presents before Thanksgiving."

"Then, *dear* Mr. Aladdin, would you buy me something different, something that I want to give away, and buy it a little sooner than Christmas?"

"That depends. I don't relish having my Christmas presents given away. I like to have them kept forever in little girls' bureau drawers, all wrapped in pink tissue paper; but explain the matter and perhaps I'll change my mind. What is it you want?"

"I need a wedding-ring dreadfully," said Rebecca, "but it's a sacred secret."

Adam Ladd's eyes flashed with surprise and he smiled to himself with pleasure. Had he on his list of acquaintances, he asked himself, a person of any age or sex so altogether irresistible and unique as this child? Then he turned to face her with the merry, teasing look that made him so delightful to young people.

"I thought it was perfectly understood between us," he said, "that if you could ever contrive to grow up and I were willing to wait, that I was to ride up to the brick house on my snow-white —"

"Coal-black," corrected Rebecca, with a sparkling eye and a warning finger.

"— Coal-black charger; put a golden circlet on your lily-white finger, draw you up behind me on my pillion —"

"And Emma Jane, too," Rebecca interrupted.

"I think I did n't mention Emma Jane," argued Mr. Aladdin. "Three on a pillion is very uncomfortable. I think Emma Jane leaps on the back of a prancing chestnut, and we all go off to my castle in the forest."

"Emma Jane never leaps, and she'd be afraid of a prancing chestnut," objected Rebecca.

"Then she shall have a gentle cream-colored pony; but now, without any explanation, you ask me to buy you a wedding-ring, which shows plainly that you are planning to ride off on a snow-white — I mean coal-black — charger with somebody else."

Rebecca dimpled and laughed with joy at the nonsense. In her prosaic world no one but Adam Ladd played the game and answered the fool according to his folly. Nobody else talked delicious fairy-story twaddle but Mr. Aladdin.

"The ring is n't for *me!*" she explained carefully. "You know very well that Emma Jane nor I can't be married till we're through Quackenbos's Grammar, Greenleaf's Arithmetic, and big enough to wear long trails and run a sewing-machine. The ring is for a friend."

"Why does n't the groom give it to his bride himself?"

"Because he 's poor and kind of thoughtless, and anyway she is n't a bride any more; she has three step and three other kind of children."

Adam Ladd put the whip back in the socket thoughtfully, and then stooped to tuck in the rug over Rebecca's feet and his own. When he raised his head again he asked: "Why not tell me a little more, Rebecca? I'm safe!"

Rebecca looked at him, feeling his wisdom and strength, and above all his sympathy. Then she said hesitatingly: "You remember I told you all about the Simpsons that day on your aunt's porch when you bought the soap because I told you how the family were always in trouble and how much they needed a banquet lamp? Mr. Simpson, Clara Belle's father, has always been very poor, and not always very good, — a little bit *thievish*, you know, — but oh, so pleasant and nice to talk to! and now he 's turning over a new leaf. And everybody in Riverboro liked Mrs. Simpson when she came here a stranger, because they were sorry for her and she was so patient, and such a hard worker, and so kind to the children. But where she lives now, though they used to know her when she was a girl, they're not polite to her and don't give her scrubbing and washing; and

Clara Belle heard our teacher say to Mrs. Fogg that the Acreville people were stiff, and despised her because she did n't wear a wedding-ring, like all the rest. And Clara Belle and I thought if they were so mean as that, we'd love to give her one, and then she'd be happier and have more work; and perhaps Mr. Simpson if he gets along better will buy her a breast-pin and earrings, and she'll be fitted out like the others. I know Mrs. Peter Meserve is looked up to by everybody in Edgewood on account of her gold bracelets and moss agate necklace."

Adam turned again to meet the luminous, innocent eyes that glowed under the delicate brows and long lashes, feeling as he had more than once felt before, as if his worldly-wise, grown-up thoughts had been bathed in some purifying spring.

"How shall you send the ring to Mrs. Simpson?" he asked, with interest.

"We have n't settled yet; Clara Belle's afraid to do it, and thinks I could manage better. Will the ring cost much? because, of course, if it does, I must ask Aunt Jane first. There are things I have to ask Aunt Miranda, and others that belong to Aunt Jane."

"It costs the merest trifle. I'll buy one and bring it to you, and we'll consult about it; but I think as you're great friends with Mr. Simpson you'd better send it to him in a letter, let-

ters being your strong point! It's a present a man ought to give his own wife, but it's worth trying, Rebecca. You and Clara Belle can manage it between you, and I'll stay in the background where nobody will see me."

NINTH CHRONICLE

THE GREEN ISLE

Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on
Day and night and night and day,
Drifting on his weary way.

Shelley.

MEANTIME in these frosty autumn days life was crowded with events in the lonely Simpson house at Acreville.

The tumble-down dwelling stood on the edge of Pliny's Pond; so called because old Colonel Richardson left his lands to be divided in five equal parts, each share to be chosen in turn by one of his five sons, Pliny, the eldest, having priority of choice.

Pliny Richardson, having little taste for farming, and being ardently fond of fishing, rowing, and swimming, acted up to his reputation of being "a little mite odd," and took his whole twenty acres in water — hence Pliny's Pond.

The eldest Simpson boy had been working on a farm in Cumberland County for two years. Samuel, generally dubbed "See-saw," had lately found a humble place in a shingle mill

and was partially self-supporting. Clara Belle had been adopted by the Foggs; thus there were only three mouths to fill, the capacious ones of Elijah and Elisha, the twin boys, and of lisping, nine-year-old Susan, the capable houseworker and mother's assistant, for the baby had died during the summer; died of discouragement at having been born into a family unprovided with food or money or love or care, or even with desire for, or appreciation of, babies.

There was no doubt that the erratic father of the house had turned over a new leaf. Exactly when he began, or how, or why, or how long he would continue the praiseworthy process, — in a word whether there would be more leaves turned as the months went on, — Mrs. Simpson did not know, and it is doubtful if any authority lower than that of Mr. Simpson's Maker could have decided the matter. He had stolen articles for swapping purposes for a long time, but had often avoided detection, and always escaped punishment until the last few years. Three fines imposed for small offenses were followed by several arrests and two imprisonments for brief periods, and he found himself wholly out of sympathy with the wages of sin. Sin itself he did not especially mind, but the wages thereof were decidedly unpleasant and irksome to him. He also minded very much the isolated position in the community

which had lately become his; for he was a social being and would *almost* rather not steal from a neighbor than have him find it out and cease intercourse! This feeling was working in him and rendering him unaccountably irritable and depressed when he took his daughter over to Riverboro at the time of the great flag-raising.

There are seasons of refreshment, as well as seasons of drought, in the spiritual, as in the natural world, and in some way or other dews and rains of grace fell upon Abner Simpson's heart during that brief journey. Perhaps the giving away of a child that he could not support had made the soil of his heart a little softer and readier for planting than usual; but when he stole the new flag off Mrs. Peter Meserve's doorsteps, under the impression that the cotton-covered bundle contained freshly washed clothes, he unconsciously set certain forces in operation.

It will be remembered that Rebecca saw an inch of red bunting peeping from the back of his wagon, and asked the pleasure of a drive with him. She was no daughter of the regiment, but she proposed to follow the flag. When she diplomatically requested the return of the sacred object which was to be the glory of the "raising" next day, and he thus discovered his mistake, he was furious with himself for having slipped into a disagreeable predica-

ment; and later, when he unexpectedly faced a detachment of Riverboro society at the crossroads, and met not only their wrath and scorn, but the reproachful, disappointed glance of Rebecca's eyes, he felt degraded as never before.

The night at the Center Tavern did not help matters, nor the jolly patriotic meeting of the three villages at the flag-raising next morning. He would have enjoyed being at the head and front of the festive preparations, but as he had cut himself off from all such friendly gatherings, he intended at any rate to sit in his wagon on the very outskirts of the assembled crowd and see some of the gayety; for, heaven knows, he had little enough, he who loved talk, and song, and story, and laughter, and excitement.

The flag was raised, the crowd cheered, the little girl to whom he had lied, the girl who was impersonating the State of Maine, was on the platform "speaking her piece," and he could just distinguish some of the words she was saying: —

> For it 's your star, my star, all the stars together,
> That makes our country's flag so proud
> To float in the bright fall weather.

Then suddenly there was a clarion voice cleaving the air, and he saw a tall man standing in the center of the stage and heard him crying: "*Three cheers for the girl that saved the flag from the hands of the enemy!*"

He was sore and bitter enough already; lonely, isolated enough; with no lot nor share in the honest community life; no hand to shake, no neighbor's meal to share; and this unexpected public arraignment smote him between the eyes. With resentment newly kindled, pride wounded, vanity bleeding, he flung a curse at the joyous throng and drove toward home, the home where he would find his ragged children and meet the timid eyes of a woman who had been the loyal partner of his poverty and disgraces.

It is probable that even then his (extremely light) hand was already on the "new leaf." The angels, doubtless, were not especially proud of the matter and manner of his reformation, but I dare say they were glad to count him theirs on any terms, so difficult is the reformation of this blind and foolish world! They must have been; for they immediately flung into his very lap a profitable, and what is more to the point, an interesting and agreeable situation where money could be earned by doing the very things his nature craved. There were feats of daring to be performed in sight of admiring and applauding stable boys; the horses he loved were his companions; he was *obliged* to "swap," for Daly, his employer, counted on him to get rid of all undesirable stock; power and responsibility of a sort were

given him freely, for Daly was no Puritan, and felt himself amply capable of managing any number of Simpsons; so here were numberless advantages within the man's grasp, and wages besides!

Abner positively felt no temptation to steal; his soul expanded with pride, and the admiration and astonishment with which he regarded his virtuous present was only equaled by the disgust with which he contemplated his past; not so much a vicious past, in his own generous estimation of it, as a "thunderin' foolish" one.

Mrs. Simpson took the same view of Abner's new leaf as the angels. She was thankful for even a brief season of honesty coupled with the Saturday night remittance; and if she still washed and cried and cried and washed, as Clara Belle had always seen her, it was either because of some hidden sorrow, or because her poor strength seemed all at once to have deserted her.

Just when employment and good fortune had come to the step-children, and her own were better fed and clothed than ever before, the pain that had always lurked, constant but dull, near her tired heart, grew fierce and triumphantly strong; clutching her in its talons, biting, gnawing, worrying, leaving her each week with slighter powers of resistance. Still hope was in the air and a greater content than

had ever been hers was in her eyes; a content that came near to happiness when the doctor ordered her to keep her bed and sent for Clara Belle. She could not wash any longer, but there was the ever new miracle of the Saturday night remittance for household expenses.

"Is your pain bad to-day, mother?" asked Clara Belle, who, only lately given away, was merely borrowed from Mrs. Fogg for what was thought to be a brief emergency.

"Well, there, I can't hardly tell, Clara Belle," Mrs. Simpson replied, with a faint smile. "I can't seem to remember the pain these days without it's extra bad. The neighbors are so kind; Mrs. Little has sent me canned mustard greens, and Mrs. Benson chocolate ice-cream and mince pie; there's the doctor's drops to make me sleep, and these blankets and that great box of eatables from Mr. Ladd; and you here to keep me comp'ny! I declare I'm kind o' dazed with comforts. I never expected to see sherry wine in this house. I ain't never drawed the cork; it does me good enough jest to look at Mr. Ladd's bottle settin' on the mantelpiece with the fire shinin' on the brown glass."

Mr. Simpson had come to see his wife and had met the doctor just as he was leaving the house.

"She looks awful bad to me. Is she goin to' pull through all right, same as the last time?" he asked the doctor nervously.

"She's going to pull right through into the other world," the doctor answered bluntly; "and as there don't seem to be anybody else to take the bull by the horns, I'd advise you, having made the woman's life about as hard and miserable as you could, to try and help her to die easy!"

Abner, surprised and crushed by the weight of this verbal chastisement, sat down on the doorstep, his head in his hands, and thought a while solemnly. Thought was not an operation he was wont to indulge in, and when he opened the gate a few minutes later and walked slowly toward the barn for his horse, he looked pale and unnerved. It is uncommonly startling, first to see yourself in another man's scornful eyes, and then, clearly, in your own.

Two days later he came again, and this time it was decreed that he should find Parson Carll tying his piebald mare at the post.

Clara Belle's quick eye had observed the minister as he alighted from his buggy, and, warning her mother, she hastily smoothed the bedclothes, arranged the medicine bottles, and swept the hearth.

"Oh! don't let him in!" wailed Mrs. Simpson, all of a flutter at the prospect of such a visitor. "Oh, dear! they must think over to the village that I'm dreadful sick, or the minister would n't never think of callin'! Don't let him

in, Clara Belle! I'm afraid he will say hard words to me, or pray to me; and I ain't never been prayed to since I was a child! Is his wife with him?"

"No; he's alone; but father's just drove up and is hitching at the shed door."

"That's worse than all!" and Mrs. Simpson raised herself feebly on her pillows and clasped her hands in despair. "You must n't let them two meet, Clara Belle, and you must send Mr. Carll away; your father would n't have a minister in the house, nor speak to one, for a thousand dollars!"

"Be quiet, mother! Lie down! It'll be all right! You'll only fret yourself into a spell! The minister's just a good man; he won't say anything to frighten you. Father's talking with him real pleasant, and pointing the way to the front door."

The parson knocked and was admitted by the excited Clara Belle, who ushered him tremblingly into the sickroom, and then betook herself to the kitchen with the children, as he gently requested her.

Abner Simpson, left alone in the shed, fumbled in his vest pocket and took out an envelope which held a sheet of paper and a tiny packet wrapped in tissue paper. The letter had been read once before and ran as follows: —

DEAR MR. SIMPSON:

This is a secret letter. I heard that the Acreville people were n't nice to Mrs. Simpson because she did n't have any wedding-ring like all the others.

I know you've always been poor, dear Mr. Simpson, and troubled with a large family like ours at the farm; but you really ought to have given Mrs. Simpson a ring when you were married to her, right at the very first; for then it would have been over and done with, as they are solid gold and last forever. And probably she would n't feel like asking you for one, because ladies are just like girls, only grown up, and I know I'd be ashamed to beg for jewelry when just board and clothes cost so much. So I send you a nice, new wedding-ring to save your buying, thinking you might get Mrs. Simpson a bracelet or eardrops for Christmas. It did not cost me anything, as it was a secret present from a friend.

I hear Mrs. Simpson is sick, and it would be a great comfort to her while she is in bed and has so much time to look at it. When I had the measles Emma Jane Perkins lent me her mother's garnet ring, and it helped me very much to put my wasted hand outside the bedclothes and see the ring sparkling.

Please don't be angry with me, dear Mr. Simpson, because I like you so much and am so glad you are happy with the horses and colts; and I believe now perhaps you *did* think the flag was a bundle of washing when you took it that day; so no more from your

Trusted friend,

REBECCA ROWENA RANDALL.

Simpson tore the letter slowly and quietly into fragments and scattered the bits on the woodpile, took off his hat, and smoothed his hair; pulled his mustaches thoughtfully, straightened his shoulders, and then, holding the tiny packet in the palm of his hand, he went round to the front door, and having entered the house stood outside the sickroom for an instant, turned the knob and walked softly in.

Then at last the angels might have enjoyed a moment of unmixed joy, for in that brief walk from shed to house Abner Simpson's conscience waked to life and attained sufficient strength to prick and sting, to provoke remorse, to incite penitence, to do all sorts of divine and beautiful things it was meant for, but had never been allowed to do.

Clara Belle went about the kitchen quietly, making preparations for the children's supper. She had left Riverboro in haste, as the change for the worse in Mrs. Simpson had been very sudden, but since she had come she had thought more than once of the wedding-ring. She had wondered whether Mr. Ladd had bought it for Rebecca, and whether Rebecca would find means to send it to Acreville; but her cares had been so many and varied that the subject had now finally retired to the background of her mind.

The hands of the clock crept on and she kept hushing the strident tones of Elijah and Elisha, opening and shutting the oven door to look at the corn bread, advising Susan as to her dishes, and marveling that the minister stayed so long.

At last she heard a door open and close, and saw the old parson come out, wiping his spectacles, and step into the buggy for his drive to the village.

Then there was another period of suspense, during which the house was as silent as the grave, and presently her father came into the kitchen, greeted the twins and Susan, and said to Clara Belle: "Don't go in there yet!" jerking his thumb towards Mrs. Simpson's room; "she's all beat out and she's just droppin' off to sleep. I'll send some groceries up from the store as I go along. Is the doctor makin' a second call to-night?"

"Yes; he'll be here pretty soon, now," Clara Belle answered, looking at the clock.

"All right. I'll be here again to-morrow, soon as it's light, and if she ain't picked up any I'll send word back to Daly, and stop here with you for a spell till she's better."

It was true; Mrs. Simpson was "all beat out." It had been a time of excitement and stress, and the poor, fluttered creature was dropping off into the strangest sleep — a sleep made up of waking dreams. The pain, that had encom-

passed her heart like a band of steel, lessened its cruel pressure, and finally left her so completely that she seemed to see it floating above her head; only that it looked no longer like a band of steel, but a golden circle.

The frail bark in which she had sailed her life-voyage had been rocking on a rough and tossing ocean, and now it floated, floated slowly into smoother waters.

As long as she could remember, her boat had been flung about in storm and tempest, lashed by angry winds, borne against rocks, beaten, torn, buffeted. Now the waves had subsided; the sky was clear; the sea was warm and tranquil; the sunshine dried the tattered sails; the air was soft and balmy.

And now, for sleep plays strange tricks, the bark disappeared from the dream, and it was she, herself, who was floating, floating farther and farther away; whither she neither knew nor cared; it was enough to be at rest, lulled by the lapping of the cool waves.

Then there appeared a green isle rising from the sea; an isle so radiant and fairy-like that her famished eyes could hardly believe its reality; but it was real, for she sailed nearer and nearer to its shores, and at last her feet skimmed the shining sands and she floated through the air as disembodied spirits float, till she sank softly at the foot of a spreading tree.

Then she saw that the green isle was a flowering isle. Every shrub and bush was blooming; the trees were hung with rosy garlands, and even the earth was carpeted with tiny flowers. The rare fragrances, the bird songs, soft and musical, the ravishment of color, all bore down upon her swimming senses at once, taking them captive so completely that she remembered no past, was conscious of no present, looked forward to no future. She seemed to leave the body and the sad, heavy things of the body. The humming in her ears ceased, the light faded, the birds' songs grew fainter and more distant, the golden circle of pain receded farther and farther until it was lost to view; even the flowering island gently drifted away, and all was peace and silence.

It was time for the doctor now, and Clara Belle, too anxious to wait longer, softly turned the knob of her mother's door and entered the room. The glow of the open fire illumined the darkest side of the poor chamber. There were no trees near the house, and a full November moon streamed in at the unblinded, uncurtained windows, lighting up the bare interior — the unpainted floor, the gray plastered walls, and the white counterpane.

Her mother lay quite still, her head turned and drooping a little on the pillow. Her left hand was folded softly up against her breast,

the fingers of the right partly covering it, as if protecting something precious.

Was it the moonlight that made the patient brow so white, and where were the lines of anxiety and pain? The face of the mother who had washed and cried and cried and washed was as radiant as if the closed eyes were beholding heavenly visions.

"Something must have cured her!" thought Clara Belle, awed and almost frightened by the whiteness and the silence.

She tiptoed across the floor to look more closely at the still, smiling shape, and bending over it saw, under the shadow of the caressing right hand, a narrow gold band gleaming on the work-stained finger.

"Oh, the ring came, after all!" she said in a glad whisper, "and perhaps it was that that made her better!"

She put her hand on her mother's gently. A terrified shiver, a warning shudder, shook the girl from head to foot at the chilling touch. A dread presence she had never met before suddenly took shape. It filled the room; stifled the cry on her lips; froze her steps to the floor; stopped the beating of her heart.

Just then the door opened.

"Oh, doctor! come quick!" she sobbed, stretching out her hand for help, and then cov-

ering her eyes. "Come close! Look at mother! Is she better — or is she dead?"

The doctor put one hand on the shoulder of the shrinking child, and touched the woman with the other.

"She is better!" he said gently, "and she is dead."

TENTH CHRONICLE

REBECCA'S REMINISCENCES

REBECCA was sitting by the window in her room at the Wareham Female Seminary. She was alone, as her roommate, Emma Jane Perkins, was reciting Latin down below in some academic vault of the old brick building.

A new and most ardent passion for the classics had been born in Emma Jane's hitherto unfertile brain, for Abijah Flagg, who was carrying off all the prizes at Limerick Academy, had written her a letter in Latin, a letter which she had been unable to translate for herself, even with the aid of a dictionary, and which she had been apparently unwilling that Rebecca, her bosom friend, confidante, and roommate, should render into English.

An old-fashioned Female Seminary, with its allotment of one medium-sized room to two medium-sized young females, gave small opportunities for privacy by night or day, for neither the double washstand, nor the thus far unimagined bathroom, nor even indeed the humble and serviceable screen, had been realized, in these dark ages of which I write. Accordingly, like the irrational ostrich, which

defends itself by the simple process of not looking at its pursuers, Emma Jane had kept her Latin letter in her closed hand, in her pocket, or in her open book, flattering herself that no one had noticed her pleased bewilderment at its only half-imagined contents.

All the fairies were not present at Rebecca's cradle. A goodly number of them telegraphed that they were previously engaged or unavoidably absent from town. The village of Temperance, Maine, where Rebecca first saw the light, was hardly a place on its own merits to attract large throngs of fairies. But one dear old personage who keeps her pocket full of Merry Leaves from the Laughing Tree, took a fancy to come to the little birthday party; and seeing so few of her sister-fairies present, she dowered the sleeping baby more richly than was her wont, because of its apparent lack of wealth in other directions. So the child grew, and the Merry Leaves from the Laughing Tree rustled where they hung from the hood of her cradle, and, being fairy leaves, when the cradle was given up they festooned themselves on the crib-side, and later on blew themselves up to the ceilings at Sunnybrook Farm and dangled there, making fun for everybody. They never withered, even at the brick house in Riverboro, where the air was particularly inimical to fairies, for Miss Miranda Sawyer would have

scared any ordinary elf out of her seventeen senses. They followed Rebecca to Wareham, and during Abijah Flagg's Latin correspondence with Emma Jane they fluttered about that young person's head in such a manner that Rebecca was almost afraid that she would discover them herself, although this is something, as a matter of fact, that never does happen.

A week had gone by since the Latin missive had been taken from the post-office by Emma Jane, and now, by means of much midnight oil-burning, by much cautious questioning of Miss Maxwell, by such scrutiny of the moods and tenses of Latin verbs as well-nigh destroyed her brain tissue, she had mastered its romantic message. If it was conventional in style, Emma Jane never suspected it. If some of the similes seemed to have been culled from the Latin poets, and some of the phrases built up from Latin exercises, Emma Jane was neither scholar nor critic; the similes, the phrases, the sentiments, when finally translated and written down in black-and-white English, made, in her opinion, the most convincing and heart-melting document ever sent through the mails: —

MEA CARA EMMA:

Cur audeo scribere ad te epistulam? Es mihi dea! Semper es in mea anima. Iterum et iterum es cum me in somnis. Saepe video tuas capillos auri, tuos pulchros oculos similes caelo, tuas genas,

quasi rubentes rosas in nive. Tua vox est dulcior quam cantus avium aut murmur rivuli in montibus.

Cur sum ego tam miser et pauper et indignus, et tu tam dulcis et bona et nobilis?

Si cogitabis de me ero beatus. Tu es sola puella quam amo, et semper eris. Alias puellas non amavi. Forte olim amabis me, sed sum indignus. Sine te sum miser, cum tu es prope mea vita omnis est gaudium.

Vale, carissima, carissima puella!

De tuo fideli servo

A. F.

My dear Emma:

Why dare I write to you a letter? You are to me a goddess! Always you are in my heart. Again and again you are with me in dreams. Often I see your locks of gold, your beautiful eyes like the sky, your cheeks, as red roses in snow. Your voice is sweeter than the singing of birds or the murmur of the stream in the mountains.

Why am I so wretched and poor and unworthy, and you so sweet and good and noble?

If you will think of me I shall be happy. You are the only girl that I love and always will be. Other girls I have not loved. Perhaps sometime you will love me, but I am unworthy. Without you I am wretched, when you are near my life is all joy.

Farewell, dearest, dearest girl!

From your faithful slave

A. F.

Emma Jane knew the letter by heart in English. She even knew it in Latin, only a few days before a dead language to her, but now one

filled with life and meaning. From beginning to end the epistle had the effect upon her as of an intoxicating elixir. Often, at morning prayers, or while eating her rice pudding at the noon dinner, or when sinking off to sleep at night, she heard a voice murmuring in her ear, "Vale, carissima, carissima puella!" As to the effect on her modest, countrified little heart of the phrases in which Abijah stated she was a goddess and he her faithful slave, that quite baffles description; for it lifted her bodily out of the scenes in which she moved, into a new, rosy, ethereal atmosphere in which even Rebecca had no place.

Rebecca did not know this, fortunately; she only suspected, and waited for the day when Emma Jane would pour out her confidences, as she always did, and always would until the end of time. At the present moment she was busily employed in thinking about her own affairs. A shabby composition-book with mottled board covers lay open on the table before her, and sometimes she wrote in it with feverish haste and absorption, and sometimes she rested her chin in the cup of her palm, and with the pencil poised in the other hand looked dreamily out on the village, its huddle of roofs and steeples all blurred into positive beauty by the fast-falling snowflakes.

It was the middle of December and the

friendly sky was softly dropping a great white mantle of peace and good-will over the little town, making all ready within and without for the Feast o' the Babe.

The main street, that in summer was made dignified by its splendid avenue of shade trees, now ran quiet and white between rows of stalwart trunks, whose leafless branches were all hanging heavy under their dazzling burden.

The path leading straight up the hill to the Academy was broken only by the feet of the hurrying, breathless boys and girls who ran up and down, carrying piles of books under their arms; books which they remembered so long as they were within the four walls of the recitation room, and which they eagerly forgot as soon as they met one another in the living, laughing world, going up and down the hill.

"It's very becoming to the universe, snow is!" thought Rebecca, looking out of the window dreamily. "Really there's little to choose between the world and heaven when a snowstorm is going on. I feel as if I ought to look at it every minute. I wish I could get over being greedy, but it still seems to me at sixteen as if there were n't waking hours enough in the day, and as if somehow I were pressed for time and continually losing something. How well I remember mother's story about me when I was four. It was at early breakfast on the farm, but

I called all meals 'dinner' then, and when I had finished I folded up my bib and sighed: 'Oh, dear! Only two more dinners, play a while and go to bed!' This was at six in the morning — lamplight in the kitchen, snowlight outside!

> Powdery, powdery, powdery snow,
> Making things lovely wherever you go!
> Merciful, merciful, merciful snow,
> Masking the ugliness hidden below.

Herbert made me promise to do a poem for the January 'Pilot,' but I must n't take the snow as a subject; there has been too great competition among the older poets!" And with that she turned in her chair and began writing again in the shabby book, which was already three quarters filled with childish scribblings, sometimes in pencil, and sometimes in violet ink with carefully shaded capital letters.

. . . . . .

Squire Bean has had a sharp attack of rheumatism and Abijah Flagg came back from Limerick for a few days to nurse him. One morning the Burnham sisters from North Riverboro came over to spend the day with Aunt Miranda, and Abijah went down to put up their horse. ("'Commodatin' 'Bijah" was his pet name when we were all young.) He scaled the ladder to the barn chamber — the dear old ladder that used to be my safety valve! — and pitched down the last forkful of grandfather's hay that will ever be eaten by any visiting horse.

They *will* be delighted to hear that it is all gone; they have grumbled at it for years and years.

What should Abijah find at the bottom of the heap but my Thought Book, hidden there two or three years ago and forgotten!

When I think of what it was to me, the place it filled in my life, the affection I lavished on it, I wonder that I could forget it, even in all the excitement of coming to Wareham to school. And that gives me "an uncommon thought" as I used to say! It is this: that when we finish building an air castle we seldom live in it after all; we sometimes even forget that we ever longed to! Perhaps we have gone so far as to begin another castle on a higher hilltop, and this is so beautiful, — especially while we are building, and before we live in it! — that the first one has quite vanished from sight and mind, like the outgrown shell of the nautilus that he casts off on the shore and never looks at again. (At least I suppose he does n't; but perhaps he takes one backward glance, half-smiling, half-serious, just as I am doing at my old Thought Book, and says, "*Was that my shell! Goodness gracious! how did I ever squeeze myself into it!*")

That bit about the nautilus sounds like an extract from a school theme, or a "Pilot" editorial, or a fragment of one of dear Miss Maxwell's lectures, — but I think girls of sixteen are principally imitations of the people and things they love and admire; and between editing the "Pilot," writing out Virgil translations, searching for composition subjects, and studying rhetorical models, there is very little of the original Rebecca Rowena about me at the present moment; I am just a member of the graduating class in good and regular standing. We do our

hair alike, dress alike as much as possible, eat and drink alike, talk alike, — I am not even sure that we do not think alike: and what will become of the poor world when we are all let loose upon it on the same day of June? Will life, real life, bring our true selves back to us? Will love and duty and sorrow and trouble and work finally wear off the "school stamp" that has been pressed upon all of us until we look like rows of shining copper cents fresh from the mint?

Yet there must be a little difference between us somewhere, or why does Abijah Flagg write Latin letters to Emma Jane, instead of to me? There is one example on the other side of the argument, — Abijah Flagg. He stands out from all the rest of the boys like the Rock of Gibraltar in the geography pictures. Is it because he never went to school until he was sixteen? He almost died of longing to go, and the longing seemed to teach him more than going. He knew his letters, and could read simple things, but it was I who taught him what books really meant when I was eleven and he thirteen. We studied while he was husking corn or cutting potatoes for seed, or shelling beans in the Squire's barn. His beloved Emma Jane did n't teach him; her father would not have let her be friends with a chore-boy! It was I who found him after milking-time, summer nights, suffering, yes dying, of Least Common Multiple and Greatest Common Divisor; I who struck the shackles from the slave and told him to skip it all and go on to something easier, like Fractions, Percentage, and Compound Interest, as I did myself. Oh! how he used to smell of the cows when I was correcting his sums on warm evenings, but I don't regret it, for he is now the

joy of Limerick and the pride of Riverboro, and I suppose has forgotten the proper side on which to approach a cow if you wish to milk her. This now unserviceable knowledge is neatly inclosed in the outgrown shell he threw off two or three years ago. His gratitude to me knows no bounds, but — he writes Latin letters to Emma Jane! But as Mr. Perkins said about drowning the kittens (I now quote from myself at thirteen), "It is the way of the world and how things have to be!"

Well, I have read the Thought Book all through, and when I want to make Mr. Aladdin laugh, I shall show him my composition on the relative values of punishment and reward as builders of character.

I am not at all the same Rebecca to-day at sixteen that I was then, at twelve and thirteen. I hope, in getting rid of my failings, that I have n't scrubbed and rubbed so hard that I have taken the gloss off the poor little virtues that lay just alongside of the faults; for as I read the foolish doggerel and the funny, funny "Remerniscences," I see on the whole a nice, well-meaning, trusting, loving, heedless little creature, that after all I 'd rather build on than outgrow altogether, because she is Me; the Me that was made and born just a little different from all the rest of the babies in my birthday year.

One thing is alike in the child and the girl. They both love to set thoughts down in black and white; to see how they look, how they sound, and how they make one feel when one reads them over. They both love the sound of beautiful sentences and the tinkle of rhyming words, and in fact, of the three great R's of life, they adore Reading and 'Riting, as much as they abhor 'Rithmetic.

The little girl in the old book is always thinking of what she is "going to be."

Uncle Jerry Cobb spoiled me a good deal in this direction. I remember he said to everybody when I wrote my verses for the flag-raising: "Nary rung on the ladder o' fame but that child'll climb if you give her time!" — poor Uncle Jerry! he will be so disappointed in me as time goes on. And still he would think I have already climbed two rungs on the ladder, although it is only a little Wareham ladder, for I am one of the "Pilot" editors, the first "girl editor" — and I have taken a fifty dollar prize in composition and paid off the interest on a twelve hundred dollar mortgage with it.

> High is the rank we now possess,
> But higher we shall rise;
> Though what we shall hereafter be
> Is hid from mortal eyes.

This hymn was sung in meeting the Sunday after my election, and Mr. Aladdin was there that day and looked across the aisle and smiled at me. Then he sent me a sheet of paper from Boston the next morning with just one verse in the middle of it.

> She made the cleverest people quite ashamed;
> And ev'n the good with inward envy groan,
> Finding themselves so very much exceeded,
> In their own way by all the things that she did.

Miss Maxwell says it is Byron, and I wish I had thought of the last rhyme before Byron did; my rhymes are always so common.

I am too busy doing, nowadays, to give very much thought to being. Mr. Aladdin was teasing me one day about what he calls my "cast-off careers."

"What makes you aim at any mark in particular, Rebecca?" he asked, looking at Miss Maxwell and laughing. "Women never hit what they aim at, anyway; but if they shut their eyes and shoot in the air they generally find themselves in the bull's eye."

I think one reason that I have always dreamed of what I should be, when I grew up, was, that even before father died mother worried about the mortgage on the farm, and what would become of us if it were foreclosed.

It was hard on children to be brought up on a mortgage that way, but oh! it was harder still on poor dear mother, who had seven of us then to think of, and still has three at home to feed and clothe out of the farm.

Aunt Jane says I am young for my age, Aunt Miranda is afraid that I will never really "grow up," Mr. Aladdin says that I don't know the world any better than the pearl inside of the oyster. They none of them know the old, old thoughts I have, some of them going back years and years; for they are never ones that I can speak about.

I remember how we children used to admire father, he was so handsome and graceful and amusing, never cross like mother, or too busy to play with us. He never did any work at home because he had to keep his hands nice for playing the church melodeon, or the violin or piano for dances.

Mother used to say: "Hannah and Rebecca, you must hull the strawberries, your father cannot help." "John, you must milk next year for I have n't the time and it would spoil your father's hands."

All the other men in Temperance village wore

calico, or flannel shirts, except on Sundays, but father never wore any but white ones with starched bosoms. He was very particular about them and mother used to stitch and stitch on the pleats, and press and press the bosoms and collar and cuffs, sometimes late at night.

Then she was tired and thin and gray, with no time to sew on new dresses for herself, and no time to wear them, because she was always taking care of the babies; and father was happy and well and handsome. But we children never thought much about it until once, after father had mortgaged the farm, there was going to be a sociable in Temperance village. Mother could not go as Jenny had whooping-cough and Mark had just broken his arm, and when she was tying father's necktie, the last thing before he started, he said: "I wish, Aurelia, that you cared a little about *your* appearance and *your* dress: it goes a long way with a man like me."

Mother had finished the tie, and her hands dropped suddenly. I looked at her eyes and mouth while she looked at father and in a minute I was ever so old, with a grown-up ache in my heart. It has always stayed there, although I admired my handsome father and was proud of him because he was so talented; but now that I am older and have thought about things, my love for mother is different from what it used to be. Father was always the favorite when we were little, he was so interesting, and I wonder sometimes if we don't remember interesting people longer and better than we do those who are just good and patient. If so it seems very cruel.

As I look back I see that Miss Ross, the artist

who brought me my pink parasol from Paris, sowed the first seeds in me of ambition to do something special. Her life seemed so beautiful and so easy to a child. I had not been to school then, or read George Macdonald, so I did not know that "Ease is the lovely result of forgotten toil."

Miss Ross sat out of doors and painted lovely things, and everybody said how wonderful they were, and bought them straight away; and she took care of a blind father and two brothers, and traveled wherever she wished. It comes back to me now, that summer when I was ten and Miss Ross painted me sitting by the mill-wheel while she talked to me of foreign countries!

The other day Miss Maxwell read something from Browning's poems to the girls of her literature class. It was about David the shepherd boy who used to lie in his hollow watching one eagle "wheeling slow as in sleep." He used to wonder about the wide world that the eagle beheld, the eagle that was stretching his wings so far up in the blue, while he, the poor shepherd boy, could see only the "strip 'twixt the hill and the sky"; for he lay in a hollow.

I told Mr. Baxter about it the next day, which was the Saturday before I joined the church. I asked him if it was wicked to long to see as much as the eagle saw?

There was never anybody quite like Mr. Baxter.

"Rebecca dear," he said, "it may be that you need not always lie in a hollow, as the shepherd boy did; but wherever you lie, that little strip you see 'twixt the hill and the sky' is able to hold all of earth and all of heaven, if only you have the right sort of vision."

I was a long, long time about "experiencing religion." I remember Sunday afternoons at the brick house the first winter after I went there; when I used to sit in the middle of the dining-room as I was bid, silent and still, with the big family Bible on my knees. Aunt Miranda had Baxter's "Saints' Rest," but her seat was by the window, and she at least could give a glance into the street now and then without being positively wicked.

Aunt Jane used to read the "Pilgrim's Progress." The fire burned low; the tall clock ticked, ticked, so slowly and steadily, that the pictures swam before my eyes and I almost fell asleep.

They thought by shutting everything else out that I should see God; but I did n't, not once. I was so homesick for Sunnybrook and John that I could hardly learn my weekly hymns, especially the sad, long one beginning: —

> My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
> Damnation and the dead.

It was brother John for whom I was chiefly homesick on Sunday afternoons, because at Sunnybrook Farm father was dead and mother was always busy, and Hannah never liked to talk.

Then the next year the missionaries from Syria came to Riverboro; and at the meeting Mr. Burch saw me playing the melodeon, and thought I was grown up and a church member, and so he asked me to lead in prayer.

I did n't dare to refuse, and when I prayed, which was just like thinking out loud, I found I could talk to God a great deal easier than to Aunt Miranda or even to Uncle Jerry Cobb. There were things I could say to Him that I could never say to any-

body else, and saying them always made me happy and contented.

When Mr. Baxter asked me last year about joining the church, I told him I was afraid I did not understand God quite well enough to be a real member.

"So you don't quite understand God, Rebecca?" he asked, smiling. "Well, there is something else much more important, which is, that He understands you! He understands your feeble love, your longings, desires, hopes, faults, ambitions, crosses; and that, after all, is what counts! Of course you don't understand Him! You are overshadowed by His love, His power, His benignity, His wisdom; that is as it should be! Why, Rebecca, dear, if you could stand erect and unabashed in God's presence, as one who perfectly comprehended His nature or His purposes, it would be sacrilege! Don't be puzzled out of your blessed inheritance of faith, my child; accept God easily and naturally, just as He accepts you!"

"God never puzzled me, Mr. Baxter; it is n't that," I said; "but the doctrines do worry me dreadfully."

"Let them alone for the present," Mr. Baxter said. "Anyway, Rebecca, you can never prove God; you can only find Him!"

"Then do you think I have really experienced religion, Mr. Baxter?" I asked. "Am I the beginnings of a Christian?"

"You are a dear child of the understanding God!" Mr. Baxter said; and I say it over to myself night and morning so that I can never forget it.

. . . . . .

The year is nearly over and the next few months will be lived in the rush and the whirlwind of work that comes before graduation. The bell for philosophy class will ring in ten minutes, and as I have been writing for nearly two hours, I must learn my lesson going up the Academy hill. It will not be the first time; it is a grand hill for learning! I suppose after fifty years or so the very ground has become soaked with knowledge, and every particle of air in the vicinity is crammed with useful information.

I will put my book into my trunk (having no blessed haymow hereabouts) and take it out again, — when shall I take it out again?

After graduation perhaps I shall be too grown up and too busy to write in a Thought Book; but oh, if only something would happen worth putting down; something strange; something unusual; something different from the things that happen every day in Riverboro and Edgewood!

Graduation will surely take me a little out of "the hollow," — make me a little more like the soaring eagle, gazing at the whole wide world beneath him while he wheels "slow as in sleep." But whether or no, I'll try not to be a discontented shepherd, but remember what Mr. Baxter said, that the little strip that I see "'twixt the hill and the sky" is able to hold all of earth and all of heaven, if only I have the eyes to see it.

REBECCA ROWENA RANDALL.

WAREHAM FEMALE SEMINARY, *December* 187–.

ELEVENTH CHRONICLE

ABIJAH THE BRAVE AND THE FAIR EMMAJANE

A warrior so bold and a maiden so bright
  Conversed as they sat on the green.
They gazed at each other in tender delight.
Alonzo the brave was the name of the knight,
  And the maid was the fair Imogene.

"Alas!" said the youth, "since to-morrow I go
  To fight in a far distant land,
Your tears for my absence soon ceasing to flow,
Some other will court you, and you will bestow
  On a wealthier suitor your hand."

"Oh, hush these suspicions!" Fair Imogene said,
  "So hurtful to love and to me!
For if you be living, or if you be dead,
I swear by the Virgin that none in your stead
  Shall the husband of Imogene be!"

I

EVER since she was eight years old Rebecca had wished to be eighteen, but now that she was within a month of that awe-inspiring and long-desired age she wondered if, after all, it was destined to be a turning-point in her quiet existence. Her eleventh year, for instance, had been a real turning-point, since it was then that she had left Sunnybrook Farm and come to her maiden aunts in Riverboro. Aurelia

Randall may have been doubtful as to the effect upon her spinster sisters of the irrepressible child, but she was hopeful from the first that the larger opportunities of Riverboro would be the "making" of Rebecca herself.

The next turning-point was her fourteenth year, when she left the district school for the Wareham Female Seminary, then in the heyday of its local fame. Graduation (next to marriage, perhaps, the most thrilling episode in the life of a little country girl) happened at seventeen, and not long afterward her Aunt Miranda's death, sudden and unexpected, changed not only all the outward activities and conditions of her life, but played its own part in her development.

The brick house looked very homelike and pleasant on a June morning nowadays, with children's faces smiling at the windows and youthful footsteps sounding through the halls: and the brass knocker on the red-painted front door might have remembered Rebecca's prayer of a year before, when she leaned against its sun-warmed brightness and whispered: "God bless Aunt Miranda; God bless the brick house that was; God bless the brick house that 's going to be!"

All the doors and blinds were open to the sun and air as they had never been in Miss Miranda Sawyer's time. The hollyhock bed that had

been her chief pride was never neglected, and Rebecca liked to hear the neighbors say that there was no such row of beautiful plants and no such variety of beautiful colors in Riverboro, as those that climbed up and peeped in at the kitchen windows where old Miss Miranda used to sit.

Now that the place was her very own Rebecca felt a passion of pride in its smoothly mown fields, its carefully thinned-out woods, its blooming garden spots, and its well-weeded vegetable patch; felt, too, whenever she looked at any part of it, a passion of gratitude to the stern old aunt who had looked upon her as the future head of the family, as well as a passion of desire to be worthy of that trust.

It had been a very difficult year for a girl fresh from school: the death of her aunt, the nursing of Miss Jane, prematurely enfeebled by the shock, the removal of her own invalid mother and the rest of the little family from Sunnybrook Farm. But all had gone smoothly; and when once the Randall fortunes had taken an upward turn nothing seemed able to stop their intrepid ascent.

Aurelia Randall renewed her youth in the companionship of her sister Jane and the comforts by which her children were surrounded; the mortgage was no longer a daily terror, for Sunnybrook had been sold to the new railroad;

Hannah, now Mrs. Will Melville, was happily situated; John, at last, was studying medicine; Mark, the boisterous and unlucky brother, had broken no bones for several months; while Jenny and Fanny were doing well at the district school under Miss Libby Moses, Miss Dearborn's successor.

"I don't feel very safe," thought Rebecca, remembering all these unaccustomed mercies as she sat on the front doorsteps, with her tatting shuttle flying in and out of the fine cotton like a hummingbird. "It's just like one of those too beautiful July days that winds up with a thunder-shower before night! Still, when you remember that the Randalls never had anything but thunder and lightning, rain, snow, and hail, in their family history for twelve or fifteen years, perhaps it is only natural that they should enjoy a little spell of settled weather. If it really turns out to *be* settled, now that Aunt Jane and mother are strong again I must be looking up one of what Mr. Aladdin calls my 'cast-off careers.' — There comes Emma Jane Perkins through her front gate; she will be here in a minute, and I'll tease her!" and Rebecca ran in the door and seated herself at the old piano that stood between the open windows in the parlor.

Peeping from behind the muslin curtains, she waited until Emma Jane was on the very

threshold and then began singing her version of an old ballad, made that morning while she was dressing. The ballad was a great favorite of hers, and she counted on doing telling execution with it in the present instance by the simple subterfuge of removing the original hero and heroine, Alonzo and Imogene, and substituting Abijah the Brave and the Fair Emmajane, leaving the circumstances in the first three verses unaltered, because in truth they seemed to require no alteration.

Her high, clear voice, quivering with merriment, floated through the windows into the still summer air:—

> A warrior so bold and a maiden so bright
> Conversed as they sat on the green.
> They gazed at each other in tender delight.
> Abijah the Brave was the name of the knight,
> And the maid was the Fair Emmajane.

"Rebecca Randall, stop! Somebody'll hear you!"

"No, they won't — they're making jelly in the kitchen, miles away."

> "Alas!" said the youth, "since to-morrow I go
> To fight in a far distant land,
> Your tears for my absence soon ceasing to flow,
> Some other will court you, and you will bestow
> On a wealthier suitor your hand."

"Rebecca, you can't *think* how your voice carries! I believe mother can hear it over to my house!"

"Then, if she can, I must sing the third verse, just to clear your reputation from the cloud cast upon it in the second," laughed her tormentor, going on with the song: —

> "Oh, hush these suspicions!" Fair Emmajane said,
> "So hurtful to love and to me!
> For if you be living, or if you be dead,
> I swear, my Abijah, that none in your stead,
> Shall the husband of Emmajane be!"

After ending the third verse Rebecca wheeled around on the piano-stool and confronted her friend, who was carefully closing the parlor windows: —

"Emma Jane Perkins, it is an ordinary Thursday afternoon at four o'clock and you have on your new blue barège, although there is not even a church sociable in prospect this evening. What does this mean? Is Abijah the Brave coming at last?"

"I don't know certainly, but it will be some time this week."

"And of course you'd rather be dressed up and not seen, than seen when not dressed up. Right, my Fair Emmajane; so would I. Not that it makes any difference to poor me, wearing my fourth best black and white calico and expecting nobody."

"Oh, well, *you!* There's something inside of you that does instead of pretty dresses," cried Emma Jane, whose adoration of her friend had

never altered nor lessened since they met at the age of eleven. "You know you are as different from anybody else in Riverboro as a princess in a fairy story. Libby Moses says they would notice you in Lowell, Massachusetts!"

"Would they? I wonder," speculated Rebecca, rendered almost speechless by this tribute to her charms. "Well, if Lowell, Massachusetts, could see me, or if you could see me, in my new lavender muslin with the violet sash, it would die of envy, and so would you!"

"If I had been going to be envious of you, Rebecca, I should have died years ago. Come, let's go out on the steps where it's shady and cool."

"And where we can see the Perkins front gate and the road running both ways," teased Rebecca, and then, softening her tone, she said: "How is it getting on, Emmy? Tell me what's happened since I've been in Brunswick."

"Nothing much," confessed Emma Jane. "He writes to me, but I don't write to him, you know. I don't dare to, till he comes to the house."

"Are his letters still in Latin?" asked Rebecca, with a twinkling eye.

"Oh, no! not now, because — well, because there are things you can't seem to write in Latin. I saw him at the Masonic picnic in the

grove, but he won't say anything *real* to me till he gets more pay and dares to speak to mother and father. He *is* brave in all other ways, but I ain't sure he'll ever have the courage for that, he's so afraid of them and always has been. Just remember what's in his mind all the time, Rebecca, that my folks know all about what his mother was, and how he was born on the poor-farm. Not that I care; look how he's educated and worked himself up! I think he's perfectly elegant, and I should n't mind if he had been born in the bulrushes, like Moses."

Emma Jane's every-day vocabulary was pretty much what it had been before she went to the expensive Wareham Female Seminary. She had acquired a certain amount of information concerning the art of speech, but in moments of strong feeling she lapsed into the vernacular. She grew slowly in all directions, did Emma Jane, and, to use Rebecca's favorite nautilus figure, she had left comparatively few outgrown shells on the shores of "life's unresting sea."

"Moses was n't born in the bulrushes, Emmy dear," corrected Rebecca laughingly. "Pharaoh's daughter found him there. It was n't quite as romantic a scene — Squire Bean's wife taking little Abijah Flagg from the poorhouse when his girl-mother died, but, oh, I think Abijah's splendid! Mr. Ladd says Riverboro'll

be proud of him yet, and I should n't wonder, Emmy dear, if you had a three-story house with a cupola on it, some day; and, sitting down at your mahogany desk inlaid with garnets, you will write notes stating that Mrs. Abijah Flagg requests the pleasure of Miss Rebecca Randall's company to tea, and that the Hon. Abijah Flagg, M. C., will call for her on his way from the station with a span of horses and the turquoise carryall!"

Emma Jane laughed at the ridiculous prophecy, and answered: "If I ever write the invitation I shan't be addressing it to Miss Randall, I'm sure of that; it'll be to Mrs. ——"

"Don't!" cried Rebecca impetuously, changing color and putting her hand over Emma Jane's lips. "If you won't I'll stop teasing. I could n't bear a name put to anything, I could n't, Emmy dear! I would n't tease you, either, if it were n't something we've both known ever so long — something that you have always consulted me about of your own accord, and Abijah too."

"Don't get excited," replied Emma Jane, "I was only going to say you were sure to be Mrs. Somebody in course of time."

"Oh," said Rebecca with a relieved sigh, her color coming back; "if that's all you meant, just nonsense; but I thought, I thought — I don't really know just what I thought!"

"I think you thought something you did n't want me to think you thought," said Emma Jane with unusual felicity.

"No, it's not that; but somehow, to-day, I have been remembering things. Perhaps it was because at breakfast Aunt Jane and mother reminded me of my coming birthday and said that Squire Bean would give me the deed of the brick house. That made me feel very old and responsible; and when I came out on the steps this afternoon it was just as if pictures of the old years were moving up and down the road. Everything is so beautiful to-day! Does n't the sky look as if it had been dyed blue and the fields painted pink and green and yellow this very minute?"

"It's a perfectly elegant day!" responded Emma Jane with a sigh. "If only my mind was at rest! That's the difference between being young and grown-up. We never used to think and worry."

"Indeed we did n't! Look, Emmy, there's the very spot where Uncle Jerry Cobb stopped the stage and I stepped out with my pink parasol and my bouquet of purple lilacs, and you were watching me from your bedroom window and wondering what I had in mother's little hair trunk strapped on behind. Poor Aunt Miranda did n't love me at first sight, and oh, how cross she was the first two years! But now

every hard thought I ever had comes back to me and cuts like a knife!"

"She was dreadful hard to get along with, and I used to hate her like poison," confessed Emma Jane; "but I am sorry now. She was kinder toward the last, anyway, and then, you see children know so little! We never suspected she was sick or that she was worrying over that lost interest money."

"That's the trouble. People seem hard and unreasonable and unjust, and we can't help being hurt at the time, but if they die we forget everything but our own angry speeches; somehow we never remember theirs. And oh, Emma Jane, there's another such a sweet little picture out there in the road. The next day after I came to Riverboro, do you remember, I stole out of the brick house crying, and leaned against the front gate. You pushed your little fat pink-and-white face through the pickets and said: 'Don't cry! I'll kiss you if you will me!'"

Lumps rose suddenly in Emma Jane's throat, and she put her arm around Rebecca's waist as they sat together side by side.

"Oh, I do remember," she said in a choking voice. "And I can see the two of us driving over to North Riverboro and selling soap to Mr. Adam Ladd; and lighting up the premium banquet-lamp at the Simpson party; and lay-

ing the daisies round Jacky Winslow's mother when she was dead in the cabin; and trundling Jacky up and down the street in our old baby-carriage!"

"And I remember you," continued Rebecca, "being chased down the hill by Jacob Moody, when we were being Daughters of Zion and you had been chosen to convert him!"

"And I remember you, getting the flag back from Mr. Simpson; and how you looked when you spoke your verses at the flag-raising."

"And have you forgotten the week I refused to speak to Abijah Flagg because he fished my turban with the porcupine quills out of the river when I hoped at last that I had lost it! Oh, Emma Jane, we had dear good times together in the 'little harbor.'"

"I always thought that was an elegant composition of yours — that farewell to the class," said Emma Jane.

"The strong tide bears us on, out of the little harbor of childhood into the unknown seas," recalled Rebecca. "It is bearing you almost out of my sight, Emmy, these last days, when you put on a new dress in the afternoon and look out of the window instead of coming across the street. Abijah Flagg never used to be in the little harbor with the rest of us; when did he first sail in, Emmy?"

Emma Jane grew a deeper pink and her but-

ton-hole of a mouth quivered with delicious excitement.

"It was last year at the seminary, when he wrote me his first Latin letter from Limerick Academy," she said in a half whisper.

"I remember," laughed Rebecca. "You suddenly began the study of the dead languages, and the Latin dictionary took the place of the crochet-needle in your affections. It was cruel of you never to show me that letter, Emmy!"

"I know every word of it by heart," said the blushing Emma Jane, "and I think I really ought to say it to you, because it's the only way you will ever know how perfectly elegant Abijah is. Look the other way, Rebecca. Shall I have to translate it for you, do you think, because it seems to me I could not bear to do that!"

"It depends upon Abijah's Latin and your pronunciation," teased Rebecca. "Go on; I will turn my eyes toward the orchard."

The Fair Emmajane, looking none too old still for the "little harbor," but almost too young for the "unknown seas," gathered up her courage and recited like a tremulous parrot the boyish love-letter that had so fired her youthful imagination:

"Vale, carissima, carissima puella!" repeated Rebecca in her musical voice. "Oh, how beautiful it sounds! I don't wonder it altered your

feeling for Abijah! Upon my word, Emma Jane," she cried with a sudden change of tone, "if I had suspected for an instant that Abijah the Brave had that Latin letter in him I should have tried to get him to write it to me; and then it would be I who would sit down at my mahogany desk and ask Miss Perkins to come to tea with Mrs. Flagg."

Emma Jane paled and shuddered openly. "I speak as a church member, Rebecca," she said, "when I tell you I've always thanked the Lord that you never looked at Abijah Flagg and he never looked at you. If either of you ever had, there never would have been a chance for me, and I've always known it!"

II

The romance alluded to in the foregoing chapter had been going on, so far as Abijah Flagg's part of it was concerned, for many years, his affection dating back in his own mind to the first moment that he saw Emma Jane Perkins at the age of nine.

Emma Jane had shown no sign of reciprocating his attachment until the last three years, when the evolution of the chore-boy into the budding scholar and man of affairs had inflamed even her somewhat dull imagination.

Squire Bean's wife had taken Abijah away from the poorhouse, thinking that she could

make him of some little use in her home. Abbie Flagg, the mother, was neither wise nor beautiful; it is to be feared that she was not even good, and her lack of all these desirable qualities, particularly the last one, had been impressed upon the child ever since he could remember. People seemed to blame him for being in the world at all; this world that had not expected him nor desired him, nor made any provision for him. The great battle-axe of poorhouse opinion was forever leveled at the mere little atom of innocent transgression, until he grew sad and shy, clumsy, stiff, and self-conscious. He had an indomitable craving for love in his heart and had never received a caress in his life.

He was more contented when he came to Squire Bean's house. The first year he could only pick up chips, carry pine wood into the kitchen, go to the post-office, run errands, drive the cows, and feed the hens, but every day he grew more and more useful.

His only friend was little Jim Watson, the storekeeper's son, and they were inseparable companions whenever Abijah had time for play.

One never-to-be-forgotten July day a new family moved into the white cottage between Squire Bean's house and the Sawyers'. Mr. Perkins had sold his farm beyond North Riverboro and had established a blacksmith's shop

in the village, at the Edgewood end of the bridge. This fact was of no special interest to the nine-year-old Abijah, but what really was of importance, was the appearance of a pretty little girl of seven in the front yard; a pretty little fat doll of a girl, with bright fuzzy hair, pink cheeks, blue eyes, and a smile of almost bewildering continuity. Another might have criticized it as having the air of being glued on, but Abijah was already in the toils and never wished it to move.

The next day being the glorious Fourth and a holiday, Jimmy Watson came over like David, to visit his favorite Jonathan. His Jonathan met him at the top of the hill, pleaded a pressing engagement, curtly sent him home, and then went back to play with his new idol, with whom he had already scraped acquaintance, her parents being exceedingly busy settling the new house.

After the noon dinner Jimmy again yearned to resume friendly relations, and, forgetting his rebuff, again toiled up the hill and appeared unexpectedly at no great distance from the Perkins premises, wearing the broad and beaming smile of one who is confident of welcome.

His morning call had been officious and unpleasant and unsolicited, but his afternoon visit could only be regarded as impudent, audacious, and positively dangerous; for Abijah and

Emma Jane were cozily playing house, the game of all others in which it is particularly desirable to have two and not three participants.

At that moment the nature of Abijah changed, at once and forever. Without a pang of conscience he flew over the intervening patch of ground between himself and his dreaded rival, and seizing small stones and larger ones, as haste and fury demanded, flung them at Jimmy Watson, and flung and flung, till the bewildered boy ran down the hill howling. Then he made a "stickin'" door to the play-house, put the awed Emma Jane inside, and strode up and down in front of the edifice like an Indian brave. At such an early age does woman become a distracting and disturbing influence in man's career!

Time went on, and so did the rivalry between the poorhouse boy and the son of wealth, but Abijah's chances of friendship with Emma Jane grew fewer and fewer as they both grew older. He did not go to school, so there was no meeting-ground there, but sometimes, when he saw the knot of boys and girls returning in the afternoon, he would invite Elijah and Elisha, the Simpson twins, to visit him, and take pains to be in Squire Bean's front yard doing something that might impress his inamorata as she passed the premises.

As Jimmy Watson was particularly small and fragile, Abijah generally chose feats of strength and skill for these prearranged performances.

Sometimes he would throw his hat up into the elm-trees as far as he could and, when it came down, catch it on his head. Sometimes he would walk on his hands, with his legs wriggling in the air, or turn a double somersault, or jump incredible distances across the extended arms of the Simpson twins; and his bosom swelled with pride when the girls exclaimed, "Is n't he splendid!" although he often heard his rival murmur scornfully, "*Smarty Aleck!*" — a scathing allusion of unknown origin.

Squire Bean, although he did not send the boy to school (thinking, as he was of no possible importance in the universe, it was not worth while bothering about his education), finally became impressed with his ability, lent him books, and gave him more time to study. These were all he needed, books and time, and when there was an especially hard knot to untie, Rebecca, as the star scholar of the neighborhood, helped him to untie it.

When he was sixteen he longed to go away from Riverboro and be something better than a chore-boy. Squire Bean had been giving him small wages for three or four years, and when the time of parting came presented him with a ten-dollar bill and a silver watch.

Many a time had he discussed his future with Rebecca and asked her opinion.

This was not strange, for there was nothing in human form that she could not and did not converse with, easily and delightedly. She had ideas on every conceivable subject, and would have cheerfully advised the minister if he had asked her. The fishman consulted her when he could n't endure his mother-in-law another minute in the house; Uncle Jerry Cobb did n't part with his river field until he had talked it over with Rebecca; and as for Aunt Jane, she could n't decide whether to wear her black merino or her gray thibet unless Rebecca cast the final vote.

Abijah wanted to go far away from Riverboro, as far as Limerick Academy, which was at least fifteen miles; but although this seemed extreme, Rebecca agreed, saying pensively: "There *is* a kind of magicness about going far away and then coming back all changed."

This was precisely Abijah's unspoken thought. Limerick knew nothing of Abbie Flagg's worthlessness, birth, and training, and the awful stigma of his poorhouse birth, so that he would start fair. He could have gone to Wareham and thus remained within daily sight of the beloved Emma Jane; but no, he was not going to permit her to watch him in the process of "becoming," but after he had "become" something.

He did not propose to take any risks after all these years of silence and patience. Not he! He proposed to disappear, like the moon on a dark night, and as he was, at present, something that Mr. Perkins would by no means have in the family nor Mrs. Perkins allow in the house, he would neither return to Riverboro nor ask any favors of them until he had something to offer. Yes, sir. He was going to be crammed to the eyebrows with learning for one thing, — useless kinds and all, — going to have good clothes, and a good income. Everything that was in his power should be right, because there would always be lurking in the background the things he never could help — the mother and the poorhouse.

So he went away, and although at Squire Bean's invitation he came back the first year for two brief visits at Christmas and Easter, he was little seen in Riverboro, for Mr. Ladd finally found him a place where he could make his vacations profitable and learn bookkeeping at the same time.

The visits in Riverboro were tantalizing rather than pleasant. He was invited to two parties, but he was all the time conscious of his shirt-collar, and he was sure that his "pants" were not the proper thing, for by this time his ideals of dress had attained an almost unrealizable height. As for his shoes, he felt that he

walked on carpets as if they were furrows and he were propelling a plough or a harrow before him. They played Drop the Handkerchief and Copenhagen at the parties, but he had not had the audacity to kiss Emma Jane, which was bad enough, but Jimmy had and did, which was infinitely worse! The sight of James Watson's unworthy and over-ambitious lips on Emma Jane's pink cheek almost destroyed his faith in an overruling Providence.

After the parties were over he went back to his old room in Squire Bean's shed chamber. As he lay in bed his thoughts fluttered about Emma Jane as swallows circle around the eaves. The terrible sickness of hopeless handicapped love kept him awake. Once he crawled out of bed in the night, lighted the lamp, and looked for his mustache, remembering that he had seen a suspicion of down on his rival's upper lip. He rose again half an hour later, again lighted the lamp, put a few drops of oil on his hair, and brushed it violently for several minutes. Then he went back to bed, and after making up his mind that he would buy a dulcimer and learn to play on it so that he would be more attractive at parties, and outshine his rival in society as he had aforetime in athletics, he finally sank into a troubled slumber.

Those days, so full of hope and doubt and torture, seemed mercifully unreal now, they

lay so far back in the past — six or eight years, in fact, which is a lifetime to the lad of twenty — and meantime he had conquered many of the adverse circumstances that had threatened to cloud his career.

Abijah Flagg was a true child of his native State. Something of the same timber that Maine puts into her forests, something of the same strength and resisting power that she works into her rocks, goes into her sons and daughters; and at twenty Abijah was going to take his fate in his hand and ask Mr. Perkins, the rich blacksmith, if, after a suitable period of probation (during which he would further prepare himself for his exalted destiny), he might marry the fair Emma Jane, sole heiress of the Perkins house and fortunes.

III

This was boy and girl love, calf love, perhaps, though even that may develop into something larger, truer, and finer; but not so far away were other and very different hearts growing and budding, each in its own way. There was little Miss Dearborn, the pretty school-teacher, drifting into a foolish alliance because she did not agree with her stepmother at home; there was Herbert Dunn, valedictorian of his class, dazzled by Huldah Meserve, who like a glowworm "shone afar off bright,

but looked at near, had neither heat nor light." There was sweet Emily Maxwell, less than thirty still, with most of her heart bestowed in the wrong quarter. She was toiling on at the Wareham school, living as unselfish a life as a nun in a convent; lavishing the mind and soul of her, the heart and body of her, on her chosen work. How many women give themselves thus, consciously and unconsciously; and, though they themselves miss the joys and compensations of mothering their own little twos and threes, God must be grateful to them for their mothering of the hundreds which make them so precious in His regenerating purposes.

Then there was Adam Ladd, waiting at thirty-five for a girl to grow a little older, simply because he could not find one already grown who suited his somewhat fastidious and exacting tastes.

"I'll not call Rebecca perfection," he quoted once, in a letter to Emily Maxwell, — "I'll not call her perfection, for that's a post, afraid to move. But she's a dancing sprig of the tree next it."

When first she appeared on his aunt's piazza in North Riverboro and insisted on selling him a large quantity of very inferior soap in order that her friends, the Simpsons, might possess a premium in the shape of a greatly needed banquet lamp, she had riveted his attention. He

thought at the time that he enjoyed talking with her more than with any woman alive, and he had never changed his opinion. She always caught what he said as if it were a ball tossed to her, and sometimes her mind, as through it his thoughts came back to him, seemed like a prism which had dyed them with deeper colors.

Adam Ladd always called Rebecca in his heart his little Spring. His boyhood had been lonely and unhappy. That was the part of life he had missed, and although it was the full summer of success and prosperity with him now, he found his lost youth only in her.

She was to him — how shall I describe it?

Do you remember an early day in May with budding leaf, warm earth, tremulous air, and changing, willful sky — how new it seemed? how fresh and joyous beyond all explaining?

Have you lain with half-closed eyes where the flickering of sunlight through young leaves, the song of birds and brook and the fragrance of wild flowers combined to charm your senses, and you felt the sweetness and grace of nature as never before?

Rebecca was springtide to Adam's thirsty heart. She was blithe youth incarnate; she was music — an Æolian harp that every passing breeze woke to some whispering little tune; she was a changing, iridescent joy-bubble; she was the shadow of a leaf dancing across a dusty

floor. No bough of his thought could be so bare but she somehow built a nest in it and evoked life where none was before.

And Rebecca herself?

She had been quite unconscious of all this until very lately, and even now she was but half awakened; searching among her childish instincts and her girlish dreams for some Ariadne thread that should guide her safely through the labyrinth of her new sensations.

For the moment she was absorbed, or thought she was, in the little love story of Abijah and Emma Jane, but in reality, had she realized it, that love story served chiefly as a basis of comparison for a possible one of her own, later on.

She liked and respected Abijah Flagg, and loving Emma Jane was a habit contracted early in life; but everything that they did or said, or thought or wrote, or hoped or feared, seemed so inadequate, so painfully short of what might be done or said, or thought or written, or hoped or feared, under easily conceivable circumstances, that she almost felt a disposition to smile gently at the fancy of the ignorant young couple that they had caught a glimpse of the great vision.

She was sitting under the sweet-apple tree at twilight. Supper was over; Mark's restless feet were quiet, Fanny and Jenny were tucked

safely in bed; her aunt and her mother were stemming currants on the side porch.

A blue spot at one of the Perkins windows showed that in one vestal bosom hope was not dead yet, although it was seven o'clock.

Suddenly there was the sound of a horse's feet coming up the quiet road; plainly a steed hired from some metropolis like Milltown or Wareham, as Riverboro horses when through with their day's work never disported themselves so gayly.

A little open vehicle came in sight, and in it sat Abijah Flagg. The wagon was so freshly painted and so shiny that Rebecca thought that he must have alighted at the bridge and given it a last polish. The creases in his trousers, too, had an air of having been pressed in only a few minutes before. The whip was new and had a yellow ribbon on it; the gray suit of clothes was new, and the coat flourished a flower in its button-hole. The hat was the latest thing in hats, and the intrepid swain wore a seal-ring on the little finger of his right hand. As Rebecca remembered that she had guided it in making capital G's in his copy-book, she felt positively maternal, although she was two years younger than Abijah the Brave.

He drove up to the Perkins gate and was so long about hitching the horse that Rebecca's heart beat tumultuously at the thought of

Emma Jane's heart waiting under the blue barège. Then he brushed an imaginary speck off his sleeve, then he drew on a pair of buff kid gloves, then he went up the path, rapped at the knocker, and went in.

"Not all the heroes go to the wars," thought Rebecca. "Abijah has laid the ghost of his father and redeemed the memory of his mother, for no one will dare say again that Abbie Flagg's son could never amount to anything!"

The minutes went by, and more minutes, and more. The tranquil dusk settled down over the little village street and the young moon came out just behind the top of the Perkins pine-tree.

The Perkins front door opened and Abijah the Brave came out hand in hand with his Fair Emmajane.

They walked through the orchard, the eyes of the old couple following them from the window, and just as they disappeared down the green slope that led to the riverside the gray coat-sleeve encircled the blue barège waist.

Rebecca, quivering with instant sympathy and comprehension, hid her face in her hands.

"Emmy has sailed away and I am all alone in the little harbor," she thought.

It was as if childhood, like a thing real and visible, were slipping down the grassy river-banks, after Abijah and Emma Jane, and dis-

appearing like them into the moon-lit shadows of the summer night.

"I am all alone in the little harbor," she repeated; "and oh, I wonder, I wonder, shall I be afraid to leave it, if anybody ever comes to carry me out to sea!"

A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP

Portrait of Mrs. Wiggin, 1905

A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP

SHE

WINCHESTER, *May* 28, ——,
The Royal Garden Inn.

WE are doing the English cathedral towns, Aunt Celia and I. Aunt Celia has an intense desire to improve my mind. Papa told her, when we were leaving Cedarhurst, that he would n't for the world have it too much improved, and Aunt Celia remarked that, so far as she could judge, there was no immediate danger; with which exchange of hostilities they parted.

We are traveling under the yoke of an iron itinerary, warranted neither to bend nor break. It was made out by a young High Church curate in New York, and if it were a creed, or a document that had been blessed by all the bishops and popes, it could not be more sacred to Aunt Celia. She is awfully High Church, and I believe she thinks this tour of the cathedrals will give me a taste for ritual and bring me into the true fold. Mamma was a Unitarian, and so when she was alive I generally attended service at that church. Aunt Celia says it is not a church; that the most you can say for it is, that

it is a "belief," rather loosely and carelessly formulated. She also says that dear old Dr. Kyle is the most dangerous Unitarian she knows, because he has leanings towards Christianity. Long ago, in her youth, Aunt Celia was engaged to a young architect. He, with his triangles and T-squares and things, succeeded in making an imaginary scale-drawing of her heart (up to that time a virgin forest, an unmapped territory), which enabled him to enter in and set up a pedestal there, on which he has remained ever since. He has been only a memory for many years, to be sure, for he died at the age of twenty-six, before he had had time to build anything but a livery stable and a country hotel. This is fortunate, on the whole, because Aunt Celia thinks he was destined to establish American architecture on a higher plane, rid it of its base, time-serving, imitative instincts, and waft it to a height where, in the course of centuries, it would have been revered and followed by all the nations of the earth.

I went to see the stable, after one of these Miriam-like flights of prophecy on the might-have-been. It is n't fair to judge a man's promise by one modest performance, and so I shall say nothing, save that I am sure it was the charm of the man that won my aunt's affection, not the genius of the builder.

This sentiment about architecture and this

fondness for the very toppingest High Church ritual cause Aunt Celia to look on the English cathedrals with solemnity and reverential awe. She has given me a fat note-book, with "Katharine Schuyler" stamped in gold letters on the Russia-leather cover, and a lock and key to conceal its youthful inanities from the general public. I am not at all the sort of girl who makes notes, and I have told her so; but she says that I must at least record my passing impressions if they are ever so trivial and commonplace. She also says that one's language gains unconsciously in dignity and sobriety by being set down in black and white, and that a liberal use of pen and ink will be sure to chasten my extravagances of style.

I wanted to go directly from Southampton to London with the Abbotts, our ship friends, who left us yesterday. Roderick Abbott and I had had a charming time on board ship (more charming than Aunt Celia knows, because she was very ill, and her natural powers of chaperoning were severely impaired), and the prospect of seeing London sights together was not unpleasing; but Roderick Abbott is not in Aunt Celia's itinerary, which reads: "Winchester, Salisbury, Bath, Wells, Gloucester, Oxford, London, Ely, Peterborough, Lincoln, York, Durham." These are the cathedrals Aunt Celia's curate chose to visit, and this is the order in

which he chose to visit them. Canterbury was too far east for him, and Exeter was too far west, but he suggests Ripon and Hereford if strength and time permit.

Aunt Celia is one of those persons who are born to command, and when they are thrown in contact with those who are born to be commanded all goes as merry as a marriage bell; otherwise not.

So here we are at Winchester; and I don't mind all the Roderick Abbotts in the universe, now that I have seen the Royal Garden Inn, its pretty coffee-room opening into the old-fashioned garden, with its borders of clove pinks, its aviaries, and its blossoming horse-chestnuts, great towering masses of pink bloom.

Aunt Celia has driven to St. Cross Hospital with Mrs. Benedict, an estimable lady tourist whom she "picked up" *en route* from Southampton. I am tired, and stayed at home. I cannot write letters, because Aunt Celia has the guidebooks, so I sit by the window in indolent content, watching the dear little school laddies, with their short jackets and wide white collars; they all look so jolly, and rosy, and clean, and kissable. I should like to kiss the chambermaid, too. She has a pink print dress, no fringe, thank goodness (it's curious our servants can't leave that deformity to the upper classes), but shining brown hair, plump figure, soft voice,

and a most engaging way of saying, "Yes, miss? Anythink more, miss?" I long to ask her to sit down comfortably and be English while I study her as a type, but of course I must n't. Sometimes I wish I could retire from the world for a season and do what I like, "surrounded by the general comfort of being thought mad."

An elegant, irreproachable, high-minded model of dignity and reserve has just knocked and inquired what we will have for dinner. It is very embarrassing to give orders to a person who looks like a Justice of the Supreme Court, but I said languidly: —

"What would you suggest?"

"How would you like a clear soup, a good spring soup, to begin with, miss?"

"Very much."

"And a bit of turbot next, miss, with anchovy sauce?"

"Yes, turbot, by all means," I said, my mouth watering at the word.

"And what else, miss? Would you enjoy a young duckling, miss, with new potatoes and green peas?"

"Just the thing; and for dessert"—I could n't think what I ought to order next in England, but the high-minded model coughed apologetically, and, correcting my language, said: —

"I was thinking you might like gooseberry-tart and cream for a sweet, miss."

Oh that I could have vented my New World enthusiasm in a sigh of delight as I heard those intoxicating words, heretofore met only in English novels!

"Ye—es," I said hesitatingly, though I was palpitating with joy, "I fancy we should like gooseberry-tart" (here a bright idea entered my mind); "and perhaps, in case my aunt does n't care for the gooseberry-tart, you might bring a lemon-squash, please."

Now, I had never met a lemon-squash personally, but I had often heard of it, and wished to show my familiarity with British culinary art.

"It would 'ardly be a substitute for gooseberry-tart, miss; but shall I bring *one* lemon-squash, miss?"

"Oh, as to that, it does n't matter," I said haughtily; "bring a sufficient number for two persons."

. . . . . .

Aunt Celia came home in the highest feather. She had twice been mistaken for an Englishwoman. She said she thought that lemon-squash was a drink; I thought, of course, it was a pie; but we shall find out at dinner, for, as I said, I ordered a sufficient number for two persons, and the head-waiter is not a personage who will let Transatlantic ignorance remain uninstructed.

"It would 'ardly be a substitute for gooseberry-tart, miss"

C. E. Brock
1901

At four o'clock we attended evensong at the cathedral. I shall not say what I felt when the white-surpliced boy choir entered, winding down those vaulted aisles, or when I heard for the first time that intoned service, with all its "witchcraft of harmonic sound." I sat quite by myself in a high carved-oak seat, and the hour was passed in a trance of serene delight. I do not have many opinions, it is true, but papa says I am always strong on sentiments; nevertheless, I shall not attempt to tell even what I felt in these new and beautiful experiences, for it has been better told a thousand times.

There were a great many people at service, and a large number of Americans among them, I should think, though we saw no familiar faces. There was one particularly nice young man, who looked like a Bostonian. He sat opposite me. He did n't stare — he was too well bred, but when I looked the other way he looked at me. Of course, I could feel his eyes; anybody can — at least, any girl can; but I attended to every word of the service, and was as good as an angel. When the procession had filed out, and the last strain of the great organ had rumbled into silence, we went on a tour through the cathedral, a heterogeneous band, headed by a conscientious old verger, who did his best to enlighten us, and succeeded in virtually spoiling my pleasure.

After we had finished (think of "finishing" a cathedral in an hour or two!), Aunt Celia and I, with one or two others, wandered through the beautiful close, looking at the exterior from every possible point, and coming at last to a certain ruined arch which is very famous. It did not strike me as being remarkable. I could make any number of them with a pattern without the least effort. But, at any rate, when told by the verger to gaze upon the beauties of this wonderful relic and tremble, we were obliged to gaze also upon the beauties of the aforesaid nice young man who was sketching it.

As we turned to go away, Aunt Celia dropped her bag. It was one of those detestable, all-absorbing, all-devouring, thoroughly respectable, but never proud, Boston bags, made of black cloth with leather trimmings, "C. Van T." embroidered on the side, and the top drawn up with stout cords which pass over the Boston wrist or arm. As for me, I loathe them, and would not for worlds be seen carrying one, though I do slip a great many necessaries into Aunt Celia's.

I hastened to pick up the horrid thing, for fear the nice young man would feel obliged to do it for me; but, in my indecorous haste, I caught hold of the wrong end, and emptied the entire contents on the stone flagging. Aunt Celia did n't notice; she had turned with the

verger, lest she should miss a single word of his inspired testimony. So we scrambled up the articles together, the nice young man and I; and oh, I hope I may never look upon his face again!

There were prayer-books and guidebooks, a Bath bun, a bottle of soda-mint tablets, a church calendar, a bit of gray frizz that Aunt Celia pins into her cap when she is traveling in damp weather, a spectacle-case, a brandy-flask, and a bonbon-box, which broke and scattered cloves and peppermint lozenges. (I hope he guessed Aunt Celia is a dyspeptic, and not intemperate!) All this was hopelessly vulgar, but I would n't have minded anything if there had not been a Duchess novel. Of course he thought that it belonged to me. He could n't have known Aunt Celia was carrying it for that accidental Mrs. Benedict, with whom she went to St. Cross Hospital.

After scooping the cloves out of the cracks in the stone flagging — and, of course, he need n't have done this, unless he had an abnormal sense of humor — he handed me the tattered, disreputable-looking copy of "A Modern Circe" with a bow that would n't have disgraced a Chesterfield, and then went back to his easel, while I fled after Aunt Celia and her verger.

. . . . . .

Memoranda: *The Winchester Cathedral has the longest nave. The inside is more superb than*

the outside. Izaak Walton and Jane Austen are buried here.

HE

WINCHESTER, *May* 28.
The White Swan.

As sure as my name is Jack Copley, I saw the prettiest girl in the world to-day — an American, too, or I am greatly mistaken. It was in the cathedral, where I have been sketching for several days. I was sitting at the end of a bench, at afternoon service, when two ladies entered by the side-door. The ancient maiden, evidently the head of the family, settled herself devoutly, and the young one stole off by herself to one of the old carved seats back of the choir. She was worse than pretty! I made a memorandum of her during service, as she sat under the dark carved-oak canopy, with this Latin inscription over her head: —

CARLTON CUM
DOLBY
LETANIA
IX SOLIDORUM
SUPER FLUMINA
CONFITEBOR TIBI
DŪC PROBATI

There ought to be a law against a woman's making a picture of herself, unless she is willing to allow an artist to "fix her" properly in his gallery of types.

A black-and-white sketch does n't give any definite idea of this charmer's charms, but sometime I'll fill it in — hair, sweet little hat, gown, and eyes, all in golden brown, a cape of tawny sable slipping off her arm, a knot of yellow primroses in her girdle, carved-oak background, and the afternoon sun coming through a stained-glass window. Great Jove! She had a most curious effect on me, that girl! I can't explain it — very curious, altogether new, and rather pleasant. When one of the choir-boys sang "Oh for the wings of a dove!" a tear rolled out of one of her lovely eyes and down her smooth brown cheek. I would have given a large portion of my modest monthly income for the felicity of wiping away that teardrop with one of my new handkerchiefs, marked with a tremendous "C" by my pretty sister.

An hour or two later they appeared again — the dragon, who answers to the name of "Aunt Celia," and the "nut-brown mayde," who comes when she is called "Katharine." I was sketching a ruined arch. The dragon dropped her unmistakably Boston bag. I expected to see encyclopædias and Russian tracts fall from it, but was disappointed. The "nut-brown mayde" (who has been trained in the way she should go) hastened to pick up the bag for fear that I, a stranger, should serve her by doing it. She was punished by turning it inside out, and I

was rewarded by helping her gather together the articles, which were many and ill-sorted. My little romance received the first blow when I found that she reads the Duchess novels. I think, however, she has the grace to be ashamed of it, for she blushed scarlet when I handed her "A Modern Circe." I could have told her that such a blush on such a cheek would almost atone for not being able to read at all, but I refrained. It is vexatious all the same, for, though one does n't expect to find perfection here below, the "nut-brown mayde," externally considered, comes perilously near it. After she had gone I discovered a slip of paper which had blown under some stones. It proved to be an itinerary. I did n't return it. I thought they must know which way they were going; and as this was precisely what I wanted to know, I kept it for my own use. She is doing the cathedral towns. I am doing the cathedral towns. Happy thought! Why should n't we do them together — we and Aunt Celia? A fellow whose mother and sister are in America must have some feminine society!

I had only ten minutes to catch my train for Salisbury, but I concluded to run in and glance at the registers of the principal hotels. Found my nut-brown mayde at once in the guest-book of the Royal Garden Inn: "Miss Celia Van Tyck, Beverly, Mass., U.S.A. Miss Katharine

Schuyler, New York, U.S.A." I concluded to stay over another train, ordered dinner, and took an altogether indefensible and inconsistent pleasure in writing "John Quincy Copley, Cambridge, Mass.," directly beneath the charmer's autograph.

SHE

SALISBURY, *June* 1,
The White Hart Inn.

We left Winchester on the 1.16 train yesterday, and here we are within sight of another superb and ancient pile of stone. I wanted so much to stop at the Highflyer Inn in Lark Lane, but Aunt Celia said that if we were destitute of personal dignity, we at least owed something to our ancestors. Aunt Celia has a temperamental distrust of joy as something dangerous and ensnaring. She does n't realize what fun it would be to date one's letters from the Highflyer Inn, Lark Lane, even if one were obliged to consort with poachers and trippers in order to do it.

Better times are coming, however, for she was in a melting mood last evening and promised me that wherever I can find an inn with a picturesque and unusual name, she will stop there, provided it is clean and respectable, if I on my part will agree to make regular notes of travel in my Russia-leather book. She says that ever since she was my age she has asked herself

nightly the questions Pythagoras was in the habit of using as a nightcap: —

> "What have I learned that 's worth the knowing?
> What have I done that 's worth the doing?
> What have I sought I should have shunned,
> And into what new follies run?"

I asked her why Pythagoras did n't say "runned" and make a consistent rhyme, and she evaded the point by answering that Pythagoras did n't write it in English.

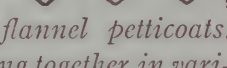
We attended service at three. The music was lovely, and there were beautiful stained-glass windows by Burne-Jones and Morris. The verger (when wound up with a shilling) talked like an electric doll. If that nice young man is making a cathedral tour like ourselves, he is n't taking our route, for he is n't here. If he has come over for the purpose of sketching he would n't stop with one cathedral, unless he is very indolent and unambitious, and he does n't look either of these.

Perhaps he began at the other end, and worked down to Winchester. Yes, that must be it, for the Ems sailed yesterday from Southampton. Too bad, for he was a distinct addition to the landscape. Why did n't I say, when he was picking up the collection of curios in Aunt Celia's bag, "You need n't bother about the novel, thank you; it is not mine, of course, but in any event it is not worth keeping."

June 2.

We intended to go to Stonehenge this morning, but it rained, so we took a "growler" and went to the Earl of Pembroke's country place to see the pictures. Had a delightful morning with the magnificent antiques, bronzes, and portraits. The Van Dyck room is a joy forever; but one really needs a guide or a friend who knows something of art if one would understand these things. There were other visitors; nobody who looked especially interesting. Don't like Salisbury so well as Winchester. Don't know why. We shall drive this afternoon, if it is fair, and go to Bath and Wells to-morrow, I am glad to say. Must read Baedeker on the Bishop's palace. Oh, dear! if one could only have a good time and not try to know anything!

Memoranda: *This cathedral has the highest spire. Remember: Winchester, longest nave; Salisbury, highest spire.*

The Lancet style is those curved lines meeting in a rounding or a sharp point like this , *and then joined together like this*  , *the way they scallop babies' flannel petticoats. Gothic looks like triangles meeting together in various spots and joined with beautiful sort of ornamented knobs. I think I recognize Gothic when I see it. Then there is Norman, Early English, fully developed Early English, Early and Late Perpendicular, Transition, and, for aught I*

know, a lot of others. Aunt Celia can tell them all apart.

HE

SALISBURY, *June* 3,
The Red Lion.

I went off on a long tramp this afternoon, and coming on a pretty river flowing through green meadows, with a fringe of trees on either side, I sat down to make a sketch. I heard feminine voices in the vicinity, but as these are generally a part of the landscape in the tourist season, I paid no special notice. Suddenly a dainty patent-leather shoe floated towards me on the surface of the stream. It evidently had just dropped in, for it was right side up with care, and was disporting itself most merrily. "Did ever Jove's tree drop such fruit?" I quoted as I fished it out on my stick; and just then I heard a distressed voice saying, "Oh, Aunt Celia, I've lost my smart little London shoe. I was sitting in a tree taking a pebble out of the heel, when I saw a caterpillar, and dropped it into the river — the shoe, you know, not the caterpillar."

Hereupon she came in sight, and I witnessed the somewhat unusual spectacle of my nut-brown mayde hopping, like a divine stork, on one foot, and ever and anon emitting a feminine

I offered it to her with Distinguished Grace

shriek as the other, clad in a delicate silk stocking, came in contact with the ground. I rose quickly, and, polishing the patent leather ostentatiously inside and out with my handkerchief, I offered it to her with distinguished grace. She sat hurriedly down on the ground with as much dignity as possible, and then, recognizing me as the person who picked up the contents of Aunt Celia's bag, she said, dimpling in the most distracting manner (that's another thing there ought to be a law against): —

"Thank you again; you seem to be a sort of knight-errant."

"Shall I — assist you?" I asked. I might have known that this was going too far. Of course I did n't suppose she would let me help her put the shoe on, but I thought — upon my soul, I don't know what I thought, for she was about a million times prettier to-day than yesterday.

"No, thank you," she said, with polar frigidity. "Good-afternoon." And she hopped back to her Aunt Celia without another word.

I don't know how to approach Aunt Celia. She is formidable. By a curious accident of feature, for which she is not in the least responsible, she always wears an unfortunate expression as of one perceiving some offensive odor in the immediate vicinity. This may be a mere accident of high birth. It is the kind of nose

often seen in the "first families," and her name betrays the fact that she is of good old Knickerbocker origin, despite her resemblance to the typical Boston spinster, who has lately been defined as a woman with spectacles, bag, and a purpose. We go to Wells to-morrow — at least, I think we do.

SHE

SALISBURY, *June* 3.

I did n't like Salisbury at first, but I find it is the sort of place that grows on one the longer one stays in it. I am quite sorry we must leave so soon, but Aunt Celia is always in haste to be gone. We had a charming walk this afternoon and found the outskirts of Salisbury most beautiful. Bath may be interesting, but it is entirely out of the beaten path from here. Not that it matters.

SHE

BATH, *June* 7.
The Best Hotel.

I met him at Wells and again this afternoon here. We are always being ridiculous, and he is always rescuing us. Aunt Celia never really sees him, and thus never recognizes him when he appears again, always as the flower of chivalry

and guardian of ladies in distress. I will never again travel abroad without a man, even if I have to hire one from a feeble-minded asylum. We work like galley-slaves, Aunt Celia and I, finding out about trains and things. Neither of us can understand Bradshaw, and I can't even grapple with the lesser intricacies of the A B C Railway Guide. The trains, so far as I can see, always arrive before they go out, and I can never tell whether to read up the page or down. It is certainly very queer that the stupidest man that breathes, one that barely escapes idiocy, can disentangle a railway guide when the brightest woman fails. Even the boots at the inn in Wells took my book, and, rubbing his frightfully dirty finger down the row of puzzling figures, found the place in a minute, and said, "There ye are, miss." It is very humiliating. I suppose there are Bradshaw professorships in the English universities, but the boots cannot have imbibed his knowledge there. A traveler at *table d'hôte* dinner yesterday said there are three classes of Bradshaw trains in Great Britain: those that depart and never arrive, those that arrive, but never depart, and those that can be caught in transit, going on, like the wheel of eternity, with neither beginning nor end. All the time I have left from the study of routes and hotels I spend on guidebooks. Now, I'm sure that if any one of the

men I know were here, he could tell me all that is necessary as we walk along the streets. I don't say it in a frivolous or sentimental spirit in the least, but I do affirm that there is hardly any juncture in life where one is n't better off for having a man about. I should never dare divulge this to Aunt Celia, for she does n't think men very nice. She excludes them from conversation as if they were indelicate subjects.

But to go on, we were standing at the door of Ye Crowne and Keys at Wells, waiting for the fly which we had ordered to take us to the station, when who should drive up in a four-wheeler but the flower of chivalry. Aunt Celia was saying very audibly, "We shall certainly miss the train, if the man does n't come at once."

"Pray take this cab," said the flower of chivalry. "I am not leaving for an hour or more."

Aunt Celia got in without a murmur; I sneaked in after her, not daring to lift my eyes. I don't think she looked at him, though she did vouchsafe the remark that he seemed to be a civil sort of person.

I was walking about by myself this afternoon. Aunt Celia and I had taken a long drive, and she had dropped me in a quaint old part of the town that I might have a brisk walk home for exercise. Suddenly it began to rain, which it is apt to do in England, between the showers,

and at the same moment I espied a sign, "Martha Huggins, Licensed Victualer." It was a nice, tidy little shop, with a fire on the hearth and flowers in the window, and I thought no one would catch me if I stepped inside to chat with Martha until the sun shone again. I fancied it would be delightful and Dickensy to talk quietly with a licensed victualer by the name of Martha Huggins.

Just after I had settled myself, the flower of chivalry came in and ordered ale. I was disconcerted at being found in a dramshop alone, for I thought, after the bag episode, he might fancy us a family of inebriates. But he did n't evince the slightest astonishment; he merely lifted his hat, and walked out after he had finished his ale. He certainly has the loveliest manners, and his hair is a more beautiful color every time I see him.

And so it goes on, and we never get any further. I like his politeness and his evident feeling that I can't be flirted and talked with like a forward boarding-school miss; but I must say I don't think much of his ingenuity. Of course one can't have all the virtues, but if I were he, I would part with my distinguished air, my charming ease — in fact, almost anything, if I could have in exchange a few grains of common-sense, just enough to guide me in the practical affairs of life.

I wonder what he is? He might be an artist, but he does n't seem quite like an artist; or just a dilettante, but he does n't look in the least like a dilettante. Or he might be an architect. I think that is the most probable guess of all. Perhaps he is only "going to be" one of these things, for he can't be more than twenty-five or twenty-six. Still, he looks as if he were something already; that is, he has a kind of self-reliance in his mien — not self-assertion, nor self-esteem, but belief in self, as if he were able, and knew that he was able, to conquer circumstances.

Aunt Celia would n't stay at Ye Olde Bell and Horns here. She looked under the bed (which, I insist, was an unfair test), and ordered her luggage to be taken instantly to the Grand Pump Room Hotel.

Memoranda: *Bath became distinguished for its architecture and popular as a fashionable resort in the 17th century from the deserved repute of its waters and through the genius of two men, Wood the architect and Beau Nash, Master of Ceremonies. A true picture of the society of the period is found in Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker," which Aunt Celia says she will read and tell me about, at least as much as is necessary. Remember the window of the seven lights in the Abbey Church, the one with the angels ascending and descending; also the rich Perp. chantry of Prior*

I was disconcerted at being found in a Dramshop alone

Bird, S. of chancel. It is Murray who calls it a Perp. chantry, not I.

SHE

BATH, *June* 8.

It was very wet this morning, and I had breakfast in my room. The maid's name is Hetty Precious, and I could eat almost anything brought me by such a beautifully named person. A little parcel postmarked Bath was on my tray, but as the address was printed, I have no clue to the sender. It was a wee copy of Jane Austen's "Persuasion," which I have read before, but was glad to see again, because I had forgotten that the scene is partly laid in Bath, and now I can follow dear Anne and vain Sir Walter, hateful Elizabeth and scheming Mrs. Clay through Camden Place and Bath Street, Union Street, Milsom Street, and the Pump Yard. I can even follow them to the site of the White Hart Hotel, where the adorable Captain Wentworth wrote the letter to Anne. After more than two hundred pages of suspense, with what joy and relief did I read that letter! I wonder if Anne herself was any more excited than I!

At first I thought Roderick Abbott sent the book, until I remembered that his literary taste is "Puck" in America and "Pick-me-up" and

"Tit-Bits" in England; and now I don't know what to think. I turned to Captain Wentworth's letter in the last chapter but one — oh, it *is* a beautiful letter! I only *wish* somebody would write me that he is "half agony, half hope," and that I "pierce his soul." Of course, it would be wicked to pierce a soul, and of course they would n't write that way nowadays; but there is something perfectly delightful about the expression.

Well, when I found the place, what do you suppose? Some of the sentences in the letter seem to be underlined ever so faintly; so faintly, indeed, that I cannot quite decide whether it's my imagination or a lead-pencil, but this is the way the page seems to look: —

"I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone forever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant. You alone have brought me to Bath. For you alone I think and plan. Have you not seen this? Can you fail to have un-

derstood my wishes? I had not waited even these ten days, could I have read your feelings, as I think you must have penetrated mine. I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice when they would be lost on others. Too good, too excellent creature! You do us justice indeed! You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most undeviating, in

"F. W."

Of course, this means nothing. Somebody has been reading the book, and marked it idly as he (or she) read. I can imagine some one's underlining a splendid sentiment like "Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman!" but why should a reader lay stress on such a simple sentence as "You alone brought me to Bath"?

HE

GLOUCESTER, *June* 10.
The Golden Slipper.

Nothing accomplished yet. Her aunt is a Van Tyck, and a stiff one, too. I am a Copley, and that delays matters. Much depends upon the manner of approach. A false move would be fatal. We have seven more towns (as per

itinerary), and if their thirst for cathedrals is n't slaked when these are finished, we have the entire Continent to do. If I could only succeed in making an impression on the retina of Aunt Celia's eye! Though I have been under her feet for ten days, she never yet has observed me. This absent-mindedness of hers serves me ill now, but it may prove a blessing later on.

I made two modest moves on the chessboard of Fate yesterday, but they were so very modest and mysterious that I almost fear they were never noticed.

SHE

GLOUCESTER, *June* 10.
In Impossible Lodgings chosen by Me.

Something else awfully exciting has happened.

When we walked down the railway platform at Bath, I saw a pink placard pasted on the window of a first-class carriage. It had "VAN TYCK. RESERVED," written on it, after the English fashion, and we took our places without question. Presently Aunt Celia's eyes and mine alighted at the same moment on a bunch of yellow primroses pinned on the stuffed back of the most comfortable seat next the window.

"They do things so well in England," said Aunt Celia admiringly. "The landlord must have sent my name to the guard — you see the

advantage of stopping at the best hotels, Katharine — but one would not have suspected him capable of such a refined attention as the bunch of flowers. You must take a few of them, dear; you are so fond of primroses."

Oh! I am having a delicious time abroad! I do think England is the most interesting country in the world; and as for the cathedral towns, how can any one bear to live anywhere else? It is late for primroses; where did he (the landlord, I mean) get them?

SHE

OXFORD, *June* 12.
The Mitre.

It was here in Oxford that a grain of common-sense entered the brain of the flower of chivalry. You might call it the dawn of reason. We had spent part of the morning in High Street, "the noblest old street in England," as our dear Hawthorne calls it. As Wordsworth had written a sonnet about it, Aunt Celia was armed for the fray, a volume of Wordsworth in one hand, and one of Hawthorne in the other. (I wish Baedeker and Murray did n't give such full information about what one ought to read before one can approach these places in a proper spirit.) When we had done High Street, we went to Magdalen College, and sat down on a bench in Addison's Walk, where Aunt Celia pro-

ceeded to store my mind with the principal facts of Addison's career, and his influence on the literature of the something or other century. The cramming process over, we wandered along, and came upon "him" sketching a shady corner of the walk.

Aunt Celia went up behind him, and, Van Tyck though she is, she could not restrain her admiration of his work. I was surprised myself; I did n't suppose so good-looking a youth could do such good work. I retired to a safe distance, and they chatted together. He offered her the sketch; she refused to take advantage of his kindness. He said he would "dash off" another that evening and bring it to our hotel — "so glad to do anything for a fellow-countryman," etc. I peeped from behind a tree and saw him give her his card. It was an awful moment; I trembled, but she read it with unmistakable approval, and gave him her own with an expression that meant, "Yours is good, but beat that if you can!"

She called to me, and I appeared. Mr. John Quincy Copley, Cambridge, was presented to her niece, Miss Katharine Schuyler, New York. It was over, and a very small thing to take so long about, too.

He is an architect, and, of course, has a smooth path into Aunt Celia's affections. Theological students, ministers, missionaries,

heroes, and martyrs she may distrust, but architects never!

"He is an architect, my dear Katharine, and he is a Copley," she told me afterwards. "I never knew a Copley who was not respectable, and many of them have been more."

After the introduction was over, Aunt Celia asked him guilelessly if he had visited any other of the English cathedrals. Any others, indeed! — this to a youth who had been all but in her lap for a fortnight. It was a blow, but he rallied bravely, and, with an amused look in my direction, replied discreetly that he had visited most of them at one time or another. I refused to let him see that I had ever noticed him before — that is, particularly.

I wish I had had an opportunity of talking to him of our plans, but just as I was leading the conversation into the proper channels, the waiter came in for breakfast orders — as if it mattered what one had for breakfast, or whether one had any at all. I can understand an interest in dinner or even in luncheon, but not in breakfast; at least not when more important things are under consideration.

. . . . . .

Memoranda: "*The very stones and mortar of this historic town seem impregnated with the spirit of restful antiquity.* (Extract from one of Aunt Celia's letters.) *Among the great men who*

have studied here are the Prince of Wales, Duke of Wellington, Gladstone, Sir Robert Peel, Sir Philip Sidney, William Penn, John Locke, the two Wesleys, Ruskin, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Otway. (Look Otway up.)

HE

OXFORD, *June* 13.
The Angel.

I have done it, and if I had n't been a fool and a coward I might have done it a week ago, and spared myself a good deal of delicious torment. "How sweet must be Love's self possessed, when but Love's shadows are so rich in joy!" or something of that sort.

I have just given two hours to a sketch of Addison's Walk, and carried it to Aunt Celia at the Mitre. Object, to find out whether they make a long stay in London (our next point), and, if so, where. It seems they stop only a night. I said in the course of conversation: —

"So Miss Schuyler is willing to forego a London season? Marvelous self-denial!"

"My niece did not come to Europe for a London season," replied Miss Van Tyck. "We go through London this time merely as a cathedral town, simply because it chances to be where it is, geographically. We shall visit St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and then go directly on, that our chain of impressions may have ab-

solute continuity and be free from any disturbing elements."

Oh, but she is lovely, is Aunt Celia! London a cathedral town!

Now, for my own part, I should like to drop St. Paul's for once, and omit Westminster Abbey for the moment, and sit on the top of a 'bus with Miss Schuyler or in a hansom jogging up and down Piccadilly. The hansom should have bouquets of paper-flowers in the windows, the horse should wear carnations in his headstall, and Miss Schuyler should ask me questions to which I should always know the right answers. This would be but a prelude, for I should wish later to ask her questions to which I should hope she would also know the right answers.

Heigho! I did n't suppose that anything could be lovelier than that girl's smile, but there is, and it is her voice.

I shall call there again to-morrow morning. I don't know on what pretext, but I shall call, for my visit was curtailed this evening by the entrance of the waiter, who asked what they would have for breakfast. Miss Van Tyck said she would be disengaged *in a moment*, so naturally I departed, with a longing to knock the impudent waiter's head against the uncomprehending wall. Breakfast indeed! A fellow can breakfast regularly, and yet be in a starving condition.

HE

OXFORD, *June* 14.
The Angel.

I have just called. They have gone! Gone hours before they intended! How shall I find her in London?

HE

LONDON, *June* 15.
Walsingham House Hotel.

As a cathedral town London leaves much to be desired. There are too many hotels, too many people, and the distances are too great. For ten hours I kept a hansom galloping between St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, with no result. I am now going to Ely, where I shall stay in the cathedral from morning till night, and have my meals brought to me on a tray by the verger.

SHE

ELY, *June* 15.
At Miss Kettlestring's lodgings.

I have lost him! He was not at St. Paul's or Westminster in London — great, cruel, busy, brutal London, that could swallow up any precious thing and make no sign. And he is not here! They say it is a very fine cathedral.

Memoranda: *The Octagon is perhaps the most*

beautiful and original design to be found in the whole range of Gothic architecture. Remember, also, the retro-choir. The lower tier of windows consists of three long lancets, with groups of Purbeck shafts at the angles; the upper, of five lancets, diminishing from the centre, and set back, as in the clerestory, within an arcade supported by shafts. (I don't believe even he could make head or tail of this.) *Remember the curious bosses under the brackets of the stone altar in the Alcock Chapel. They represent ammonites projecting from their shells and biting each other.* (If I were an ammonite I know I should bite Aunt Celia. Look up ammonite.)

HE

ELY, *June* 18.
The Lamb Hotel.

I cannot find her! Am racked with rheumatic pains sitting in this big, empty, solitary, hollow, reverberating, damp, desolate, deserted cathedral hour after hour. On to Peterborough this evening.

SHE

PETERBOROUGH, *June* 18.

He is not here. The cathedral, even the celebrated west front, seems to me somewhat overrated. Catherine of Aragon (or one of those

Henry the Eighth wives) is buried here, also Mary Queen of Scots; but I am tired of looking at graves, viciously tired, too, of writing in this trumpery note-book. We move on this afternoon.

HE

PETERBOROUGH, *June* 19.

A few more days of this modern Love Chase will unfit me for professional work. Tried to draw the roof of the choir, a good specimen of early Perp., and failed. Studied the itinerary again to see if it had any unsuspected suggestions in cipher. No go! York and Durham were double-starred by Aunt Celia's curate as places for long stops. Perhaps we shall meet again there, if not at Lincoln.

HE

LINCOLN, *June* 22.
The Black Boy Inn.

I am stopping at a beastly little hole, which has the one merit of being opposite Miss Schuyler's lodgings, for I have found her at last. My sketch-book has deteriorated in artistic value during the last two weeks. Many of its pages, while interesting to me as reminiscences, will hardly do for family or studio exhibition. If I should label them, the result would be something like this: —

1. Sketch of a footstool and desk where I first saw Miss Schuyler kneeling.

2. Sketch of a carved-oak chair, Miss Schuyler sitting in it.

3. "Angel choir." Heads of Miss Schuyler introduced into the carving.

4. Altar screen. A row of full-length Miss Schuylers holding lilies.

5. Tomb of a bishop, where I tied Miss Schuyler's shoe.

6. Tomb of another bishop, where I had to tie it again because I did it so badly the first time.

7. Sketch of the shoe, the shoe-lace worn out with much tying.

8. Sketch of the blessed verger who called her "Madam" when we were walking together.

9. Sketch of her blush when he did it; the prettiest thing in the world.

10. Sketch of J. Q. Copley contemplating the ruins of his heart.

"How are the mighty fallen!"

. . . . . .

SHE

LINCOLN, *June 23.*
At Miss Smallpage's, Castle Garden.

This is one of the charmingest towns we have visited, and I am so glad Aunt Celia has a letter to the Canon in residence, because it may keep her contented.

We walked up Steep Hill this morning to see the Jews' House, but long before we reached it I had seen Mr. Copley sitting on a camp-stool, with his easel in front of him. Wonderful to relate, Aunt Celia recognized him, and was most cordial in her greeting. As for me, I was never so embarrassed in my life. I felt as if he knew that I had expected to see him in London and Ely and Peterborough, though, of course, he *could n't* know it, even if he looked for, and missed me in those three dreary and over-estimated places. He had made a most beautiful drawing of the Jews' House, and completed his conquest of Aunt Celia by presenting it to her. I should like to know when my turn is coming; but, anyway, she asked him to luncheon, and he came, and we had such a cozy, homelike meal together. He is even nicer than he looks, which is saying a good deal more than I should, even to a locked book. Aunt Celia dozed a little after luncheon, and Mr. Copley almost talked in whispers, he was so afraid of disturbing her nap. It is just in these trifling things that one can tell a true man — courtesy to elderly people and consideration for their weaknesses. He has done something in the world; I was sure that he had. He has a little income of his own, but he is too proud and ambitious to be an idler. He looked so manly when he talked about it, standing up straight and strong in his knickerbockers. I

like men in knickerbockers. Aunt Celia does n't. She says she does n't see how a well-brought-up Copley can go about with his legs in that condition. I would give worlds to know how Aunt Celia ever unbent sufficiently to get engaged. But, as I was saying, Mr. Copley has accomplished something, young as he is. He has built three picturesque suburban churches suitable for weddings, and a state lunatic asylum.

Aunt Celia says we shall have no worthy architecture until every building is made an exquisitely sincere representation of its deepest purpose — a symbol, as it were, of its indwelling meaning. I should think it would be very difficult to design a lunatic asylum on that basis, but I did n't dare say so, as the idea seemed to present no incongruities to Mr. Copley. Their conversation is absolutely sublimated when they get to talking of architecture. I have just copied two quotations from Emerson, and am studying them every night for fifteen minutes before I go to sleep. I 'm going to quote them some time offhand, just after matins, when we are wandering about the cathedral grounds. The first is this: "The Gothic cathedral is a blossoming in stone, subdued by the insatiable demand of harmony in man. The mountain of granite blooms into an eternal flower, with the lightness and delicate finish as well as the aerial proportion and perspective of vegetable beauty."

Then when he has recovered from the shock of this, here is my second: "Nor can any lover of nature enter the old piles of English cathedrals without feeling that the forest overpowered the mind of the builder, and that his chisel, his saw, and plane still reproduced its ferns, its spikes of flowers, its locust, elm, pine, and spruce."

Memoranda: *Lincoln choir is an example of Early English or First Pointed, which can generally be told from something else by bold projecting buttresses and dog-tooth moulding round the abacusses.* (The plural is my own, and it does not look right.) *Lincoln Castle was the scene of many prolonged sieges, and was once taken by Oliver Cromwell.*

. . . . . .

HE

York, *June* 26.
The Black Swan.

Kitty Schuyler is the concentrated essence of feminine witchery. Intuition strong, logic weak, and the two qualities so balanced as to produce an indefinable charm; will-power large, but docility equal, if a man is clever enough to know how to manage her; knowledge of facts absolutely *nil*, but she is exquisitely intelligent in spite of it. She has a way of evading, escaping, eluding, and then gives you an intoxicat-

ing hint of sudden and complete surrender. She is divinely innocent, but roguishness saves her from insipidity. Her looks? She looks as you would imagine a person might look who possessed these graces; and she is worth looking at, though every time I do it I have a rush of love to the head. When you find a girl who combines all the qualities you have imagined in the ideal, and who has added a dozen or two on her own account merely to distract you past all hope, why stand up and try to resist her charm? Down on your knees like a man, say I!

. . . . . .

I'm getting to adore Aunt Celia. I did n't care for her at first, but she is so deliciously blind. Anything more exquisitely unserviceable as a chaperon I can't imagine. Absorbed in antiquity, she ignores the babble of contemporaneous lovers. That any man could look at Kitty when he could look at a cathedral passes her comprehension. I do not presume too greatly on her absent-mindedness, however, lest she should turn unexpectedly and rend me. I always remember that inscription on the backs of the little mechanical French toys: "Quoiqu'elle soit très solidement montée, il faut ne pas brutaliser la machine."

And so my courtship progresses under Aunt Celia's very nose. I say "progresses"; but it is impossible to speak with any certainty of court-

ing, for the essence of that gentle craft is hope, rooted in labor and trained by love.

I set out to propose to her during service this afternoon by writing my feelings on the flyleaf of the hymn-book, or something like that; but I knew that Aunt Celia would never forgive such blasphemy, and I thought that Kitty herself might consider it wicked. Besides, if she should chance to accept me, there was nothing I could do in a cathedral to relieve my feelings. No; if she ever accepts me, I wish it to be in a large, vacant spot of the universe, peopled by two only, and those two so indistinguishably blended, as it were, that they would appear as one to the casual observer. So I practiced repression, though the wall of my reserve is worn to the thinness of thread-paper, and I tried to keep my mind on the droning minor canon, and not to look at her, "for that way madness lies."

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SHE

YORK, *June* 28.
High Petergate Street.

My taste is so bad! I just begin to realize it, and I am feeling my "growing pains," like Gwendolen in "Daniel Deronda." I admired the stained glass in the Lincoln Cathedral the other day, especially the Nuremberg window.

She ignores the Babble of Contemporaneous Lovers

C. E. Brock
1901

I thought Mr. Copley looked pained, but he said nothing. When I went to my room, I consulted a book and found that all the glass in that cathedral is very modern and very bad, and the Nuremberg window is the worst of all. Aunt Celia says she hopes that it will be a warning to me to read before I speak; but Mr. Copley says no, that the world would lose more in one way than it would gain in the other. I tried my quotations this morning, and stuck fast in the middle of the first.

Mr. Copley thinks I have been feeing the vergers too liberally, so I wrote a song about it called "The Ballad of the Vergers and the Foolish Virgin," which I sang to my guitar. Mr. Copley thinks it is cleverer than anything he ever did with his pencil. Of course, he says that only to be agreeable; but really, whenever he talks to me in that way, I can almost hear myself purring with pleasure.

We go to two services a day in the Minster, and sometimes I sit quite alone in the nave drinking in the music as it floats out from behind the choir-screen. The Litany and the Commandments are so beautiful heard in this way, and I never listen to the fresh, young voices chanting "Write all these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee," without wanting passionately to be good. I love, too, the joyful burst of music in the *Te Deum:* "Thou didst

open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." I like that word "all"; it takes in foolish me, as well as wise Aunt Celia.

And yet, with all its pomp and magnificence, the service does not help me quite so much nor stir up the deep places in me so quickly as dear old Dr. Kyle's simpler prayers and talks in the village meeting-house where I went as a child. Mr. Copley has seen it often, and made a little picture of it for me, with its white steeple and the elm-tree branches hanging over it. If I ever have a husband I should wish him to have memories like my own. It would be very romantic to marry an Italian marquis or a Hungarian count, but must it not be a comfort to two people to look back on the same past?

. . . . . .

We all went to an evening service last night. It was an "occasion," and a famous organist played the Minster organ.

I wonder why choir-boys are so often playful and fidgety and uncanonical in behavior? Does the choir-master advertise "Naughty boys preferred," or do musical voices commonly exist in unregenerate bodies? With all the opportunities that they must have outside of the cathedral to exchange those objects of beauty and utility usually found in boys' pockets, there is seldom a service where they do not barter penknives, old coins, or tops, generally during the Old

Testament reading. A dozen little black-surpliced "probationers" sit together in a seat just beneath the choir-boys, and one of them spent his time this evening in trying to pull a loose tooth from its socket. The task not only engaged all his own powers, but made him the center of attraction for the whole probationary row.

Coming home, Aunt Celia walked ahead with Mrs. Benedict, who keeps turning up at the most unexpected moments. She's going to build a Gothicky memorial chapel somewhere, and is making studies for it. I don't like her in the least, but four is certainly a more comfortable number than three. I scarcely ever have a moment alone with Mr. Copley, for, go where I will and do what I please, Aunt Celia has the most perfect confidence in my indiscretion, and is always *en évidence*.

Just as we were turning into the quiet little street where we are lodging, I said: —

"Oh dear, I wish that I really knew something about architecture!"

"If you don't know anything about it, you are certainly responsible for a good deal of it," said Mr. Copley.

"I? How do you mean?" I asked quite innocently, because I could n't see how he could twist such a remark as that into anything like sentiment.

"I have never built so many castles in my life as since I've known you, Miss Schuyler," he said.

"Oh," I answered as lightly as I could, "air-castles don't count."

"The building of air-castles is an innocent amusement enough, I suppose," he said; "but I'm committing the folly of living in mine. I —"

Then I was frightened. When, all at once, you find you have something precious that you only dimly suspected was to be yours, you almost wish it had n't come so soon. But just at that moment Mrs. Benedict called to us, and came tramping back from the gate, and hooked her supercilious, patronizing arm in Mr. Copley's, and asked him into the sitting-room to talk over the "lady-chapel" in her new memorial church. Then Aunt Celia told me they would excuse me, as I had had a wearisome day; and there was nothing for me to do but to go to bed, like a snubbed child, and wonder if I should ever know the end of that sentence. And I listened at the head of the stairs, shivering, but all that I could hear was that Mrs. Benedict asked Mr. Copley to be her own architect. Her architect, indeed! That woman ought not to be at large — so rich and good-looking and unconscientious and grasping!

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HE

York, *July* 5.

I had just established myself comfortably near to Miss Van Tyck's hotel, and found a landlady after my own heart in Mrs. Pickles, No. 6, Micklegate, when Miss Van Tyck, aided and abetted, I fear, by the romantic Miss Schuyler, elected to change her quarters, and I, of course, had to change too. Mine is at present a laborious (but not unpleasant) life. The causes of Miss Schuyler's removal, as I have been given to understand by the lady herself, were some particularly pleasing window-boxes in a lodging in High Petergate Street; boxes overflowing with pink geraniums and white field-daisies. No one (she explains) could have looked at this house without desiring to live in it; and when she discovered, during a somewhat exhaustive study of the premises, that the maid's name was Susan Strangeways, and that she was promised in marriage to a brewer's apprentice called Sowerbutt, she went back to her conventional hotel and persuaded her aunt to remove without delay. If Miss Schuyler were offered a room at the Punchbowl Inn in the Gillygate and a suite at the Grand Royal Hotel in Broad Street, she would choose the former unhesitatingly; just as she refused refreshment at the best caterer's this afternoon and dragged Mrs. Benedict

and me into "The Little Snug," where an alluring sign over the door announced "A Homely Cup of Tea for Twopence." But she would outgrow all that; or, if she did n't, I have common-sense enough for two; or, if I had n't, I should n't care a hang.

Is it not a curious dispensation of Providence that, just when Aunt Celia is confined to her room with a cold, Mrs. Benedict should join our party and spend her days in our company? She drove to the Merchants' Hall and the Cavalry Barracks with us, she walked on the city walls with us, she even dared the "homely" tea at "The Little Snug"; and at that moment I determined I would n't build her memorial church for her, even at a most princely profit.

On crossing Lendal Bridge we saw the river Ouse running placidly through the town, and a lot of little green boats moored at a landing-stage.

"How delightful it would be to row for an hour!" exclaimed Miss Schuyler.

"Oh, do you think so, in those tippy boats on a strange river?" remonstrated Mrs. Benedict.

The moment I suspected she was afraid of the water, I lured her to the landing-stage and engaged a boat.

"It's a pity that that large flat one has a leak, otherwise it would have held three nicely;

but I dare say we can be comfortable in one of the little ones," I said doubtfully.

"Shan't we be too heavy for it?" Mrs. Benedict inquired timidly.

"Oh, I don't think so. We'll get in and try it. If we find it sinks too far below the waterline under our weight, we won't risk it," I replied, spurred on by such twinkles in Miss Schuyler's eyes as blinded me to everything else.

"I really don't think your aunt would like you to venture, Miss Schuyler," said the Marplot.

"Oh, as to that, she knows I am accustomed to boating," replied Miss Schuyler.

"And Miss Schuyler is such an excellent swimmer," I added.

Whereupon the Marplot and Killjoy and Gooseberry and Disturber of the Peace remarked that if it were a question of swimming she should prefer to remain at home, as she had large responsibilities devolving upon her, and her life was in a sense not her own to fling away as she might like.

I assured her solemnly that she was quite, quite right, and pushed off before she could change her mind.

After a long interval of silence, Miss Schuyler observed in the voice, accompanied by the smile and the glance of the eye, that "did" for me the moment I was first exposed to them: —

"You ought n't to have said that about my swimming, because I can't a bit, you know."

"I was justified," I answered gloomily. "I have borne too much to-day, and if she had come with us and had fallen overboard, I might have been tempted to hold her down with the oar."

Whereupon Miss Schuyler gave way to such whole-hearted mirth that she nearly upset the boat. I almost wish she had! I want to swim, sink, die, or do any other mortal thing for her.

We had a heavenly hour. It was only an hour, but it was the first time I have had any real chance to direct hot shot at the walls of the maiden castle. I regret to state that they stood remarkably firm. Of course, I don't wish to batter them down; I want them to melt gradually under the warmth of my attack.

SHE

York, *July* 5.

We had a lovely sail on the river Ouse this afternoon. Mrs. Benedict was timid about boating, and did not come with us. As a usual thing, I hate a cowardly woman, but her lack of courage is the nicest trait in her whole character; I might almost say the only nice trait.

Mr. Copley tried in every way, short of asking me a direct question, to find out whether I

had received the marked copy of "Persuasion" in Bath, but I evaded the point.

Just as we were at the door of my lodging, and he was saying good-bye, I could n't resist the temptation of asking: —

"Why, before you knew us at all, did you put 'MISS VAN TYCK: RESERVED,' on the window of the railway carriage at Bath?"

He was embarrassed for a moment, and then he said: —

"Well, she *is*, you know, if you come to that; and, besides, I did n't dare tell the guard the placard I really wanted to put on."

"I should n't think a lack of daring your most obvious fault," I said cuttingly.

"Perhaps not; but there are limits to most things, and I had n't the pluck to paste on a pink paper with 'MISS SCHUYLER: ENGAGED,' on it."

He disappeared suddenly just then, as if he were n't equal to facing my displeasure, and I am glad he did, for I was too embarrassed for words.

Memoranda: *In the height of roofs, nave, and choir, York is first of English cathedrals.*

SHE

DURHAM, *July something or other.*
At Farmer Hendry's.

We left York this morning, and arrived in Durham about eleven o'clock. It seems there

is some sort of an election going on in the town, and there was not a single fly at the station. Mr. Copley looked about in every direction, but neither horse nor vehicle was to be had for love or money. At last we started to walk to the village, Mr. Copley so laden with our hand-luggage that he resembled a pack mule.

We called first at the Three Tuns, where they still keep up the old custom of giving a wee glass of cherry-brandy to each guest on his arrival; but, alas! they were crowded, and we were turned from the hospitable door. We then made a tour of the inns, but not a single room was to be had, not for that night, nor for two days ahead, on account of that same election.

"Had n't we better go on to Edinburgh, Aunt Celia?" I asked, as we were resting in the door of the Jolly Sailor.

"Edinburgh? Never!" she replied. "Do you suppose that I would voluntarily spend a Sunday in those bare Presbyterian churches until the memory of these past ideal weeks has faded a little from my memory? What! leave out Durham and spoil the set?" (In her agitation and disappointment she spoke of the cathedrals as if they were souvenir spoons.) "I intended to stay here for a week or more, and write up a record of our entire trip from Winchester while the impressions were fresh in my mind."

"And I had intended doing the same thing," said Mr. Copley. "That is, I hoped to finish off my previous sketches, which are in a frightful state of incompletion, and spend a good deal of time on the interior of this cathedral, which is unusually beautiful."

At this juncture Aunt Celia disappeared for a moment to ask the barmaid if, in her opinion the constant consumption of malt liquors prevents a more dangerous indulgence in brandy and whiskey. She is gathering statistics, but as the barmaids can never collect their thoughts while they are drawing ale, Aunt Celia proceeds slowly.

"For my part," said I, with mock humility, "I am a docile person, who never has any intentions of her own, but who yields herself sweetly to the intentions of other people in her immediate vicinity."

"Are you?" asked Mr. Copley, taking out his pencil.

"Yes, I said so. What are you doing?"

"Merely taking note of your statement, that's all. Now, Miss Van Tyck (of course, Aunt Celia appeared at this delightful moment), I have a plan to propose. I was here last summer with a couple of Harvard men, and we lodged at a farmhouse about a mile distant from the cathedral. If you will step into the coffee-room for an hour, I'll walk up to Farmer

Hendry's and see if they will take us in. I think we might be fairly comfortable."

"Can Aunt Celia have Apollinaris and black coffee after her morning bath?" I asked.

"I hope, Katharine," said Aunt Celia majestically — "I hope that I can accommodate myself to circumstances. If Mr. Copley can secure apartments for us, I shall be more than grateful."

So here we are, all lodging together in an ideal English farmhouse. There is a thatched roof on one of the old buildings, and the dairy-house is covered with ivy, and Farmer Hendry's wife makes a real English curtsy, and there are herds of beautiful sleek Durham cattle, and the butter and cream and eggs and mutton are delicious, and I never, never want to go home any more. I want to live here forever and wave the American flag on Washington's birthday.

I am so happy that I feel as if something were going to spoil it all. Twenty years old to-day! I wish mamma were alive to wish me many happy returns.

The cathedral is very beautiful in itself, and its situation is beyond all words of mine to describe. I greatly admired the pulpit, which is supported by five pillars sunk into the backs of squashed lions; but Mr. Copley, when I asked him the period, said, "Pure Brummagem!"

There is a nice old cell for refractory monks,

that we agreed will be a lovely place for Mrs. Benedict if we can lose her in it. She arrives, as soon as they can find room for her at the Three Tuns.

Memoranda: Casual remark for breakfast-table or perhaps for luncheon — it is a trifle heavy for breakfast: "*Since the sixteenth century, and despite the work of Inigo Jones and the great Wren* (not Jenny Wren: Christopher), *architecture has had, in England especially, no legitimate development.*" *This is the only cathedral with a Bishop's Throne or a Sanctuary Knocker.*

. . . . . .

HE

DURHAM, *July* 19.

O child of fortune, thy name is J. Q. Copley! How did it happen to be election time? Why did the inns chance to be full? How did Aunt Celia relax sufficiently to allow me to find her a lodging? Why did she fall in love with the lodging when found? I do not know. I only know Fate smiles; that Kitty and I eat our morning bacon and eggs together; that I carve Kitty's cold beef and pour Kitty's sparkling ale at luncheon, that I go to matins with Kitty, and dine with Kitty, and walk in the gloaming with Kitty — and Aunt Celia. And after a day of heaven like

this, like Lorna Doone's lover — aye, and like every other lover, I suppose — I go to sleep, and the roof above me swarms with angels, having Kitty under it.

She was so beautiful on Sunday. She has been wearing her favorite browns and yellows through the week, but on Sunday she blossomed into blue and white, topped by a wonderful hat, whose brim was laden with hyacinths. She sat at the end of a seat in the nave, and there was a capped and gowned crowd of university students in the transept. I watched them and they watched her. She has the fullest, whitest eyelids, and the loveliest lashes. When she looks down I wish she might never look up, and when she looks up I am never ready for her to look down. If it had been a secular occasion, and she had dropped her handkerchief, seven-eighths of the students would have started to pick it up — but I should have got there first! Well, all this is but a useless prelude, for there are facts to be considered — delicious, warm, breathing facts!

We were coming home from evensong, Kitty and I. (I am anticipating, for she was still "Miss Schuyler" then, but never mind.) We were walking through the fields, while Mrs. Benedict and Aunt Celia were driving. As we came across a corner of the bit of meadow land that joins the stable and the garden, we heard a muffled roar, and as we looked around we saw a

creature with tossing horns and waving tail making for us, head down, eyes flashing. Kitty gave a shriek. We chanced to be near a pair of low bars. I had n't been a college athlete for nothing. I swung Kitty over the bars, and jumped after her. But she, not knowing in her fright where she was nor what she was doing, supposing also that the mad creature, like the villain in the play, would "still pursue her," flung herself bodily into my arms, crying, "Jack! Jack! save me!"

It was the first time she had called me "Jack," and I needed no second invitation. I proceeded to save her, in the usual way, by holding her to my heart and kissing her lovely hair reassuringly as I murmured: —

"You are safe, my darling; not a hair of your precious head shall be hurt. Don't be frightened."

She shivered like a leaf.

"I am frightened," she said; "I can't help being frightened. He will chase us, I know. Where is he? What is he doing now?"

Looking up to determine if I need abbreviate this blissful moment, I saw the enraged animal disappearing in the side door of the barn; and it was a nice, comfortable Durham cow, that somewhat rare but possible thing — a sportive cow.

"Is he gone?" breathed Kitty from my waistcoat.

"Yes, he is gone — she is gone, darling. But don't move; it may come again."

My first too hasty assurance had calmed Kitty's fears, and she raised her charming flushed face from its retreat and prepared to withdraw. I did not facilitate the preparations, and a moment of awkward silence ensued.

"Might I inquire," I asked, "if the dear little person at present reposing in my arms will stay there (with intervals for rest and refreshment) for the rest of her natural life?"

She withdrew entirely now, all but her hand, and her eyes sought the ground.

"I suppose I shall have to — that is, if you think — at least, I suppose you do think — at any rate, you look as if you were thinking — that this has been giving you encouragement."

"I do indeed — decisive, undoubted, barefaced encouragement."

"I don't think I ought to be judged as if I were in my sober senses," she replied. "I was frightened within an inch of my life. I told you this morning that I was dreadfully afraid of bulls, especially mad ones, and I told you that my nurse frightened me, when I was a child, with awful stories about them, and that I never outgrew my childish terror. I looked everywhere about. The barn was too far, the fence too high; I saw him coming, and there was nothing but you and the open country. Of course I took

"Jack! Jack! Save me!"

you. It was very natural, I'm sure; any girl would have done it."

"To be sure," I replied soothingly, "any girl would have run after me, as you say."

"I did n't say any girl would have run after you — you need n't flatter yourself; and besides, I think I was really trying to protect you as well as to gain protection, else why should I have cast myself on you like a catamount, or a catacomb, or whatever the thing is?"

"Yes, darling, I thank you for saving my life, and I am willing to devote the remainder of it to your service as a pledge of my gratitude; but if you should take up life-saving as a profession, dear, don't throw yourself on a fellow with —"

"Jack! Jack!" she cried, putting her hand over my lips, and getting it well kissed in consequence. "If you will only forget that, and never, never taunt me with it afterwards, I'll — I'll — well, I'll do anything in reason — yes, even marry you!"

HE

CANTERBURY, *July* 31.
The Royal Fountain.

. . . . . .

I was never sure enough of Kitty, at first, to dare risk telling her about that little mistake of hers. She is such an elusive person that I spend

all my time in wooing her, and can never lay flattering unction to my soul that she is really won.

But after Aunt Celia had looked up my family record and given a provisional consent, and Papa Schuyler had cabled a reluctant blessing, I did not feel capable of any further self-restraint.

It was twilight here in Canterbury, and we were sitting on the vine-shaded veranda of Aunt Celia's lodging. Kitty's head was on my shoulder. There is something very queer about that; when Kitty's head is on my shoulder, I am not capable of any consecutive train of thought. When she puts it there I see stars, then myriads of stars, then, oh! I can't begin to enumerate the steps by which ecstasy mounts to delirium; but, at all events, any operation which demands exclusive use of the intellect is beyond me at these times. Still, I gathered my stray wits together, and said: —

"Kitty!"

"Yes, Jack?"

"Now that nothing but death or marriage can separate us, I have something to confess to you."

"Yes," she said serenely, "I know what you are going to say. He was a cow."

I lifted her head from my shoulder sternly, and gazed into her childlike, candid eyes.

"You mountain of deceit! How long have you known about it?"

"Lor', miss!" said Farmer Hendry, "he have n't been pastured here for three weeks"

"Ever since the first. Oh, Jack, stop looking at me in that way! Not the very first, not when I — not when you — not when we — no, not then, but the next morning, I said to Farmer Hendry, 'I wish you would keep your savage bull chained up while we are here; Aunt Celia is awfully afraid of them, especially those that go mad, like yours!' 'Lor', miss!' said Farmer Hendry, 'he have n't been pastured here for three weeks. I keep him six mile away. There ben't nothing but gentle cows in the home medder.' But I did n't think that you knew, you secretive person! I dare say you planned the whole thing in advance, in order to take advantage of my fright!"

"Never! I am incapable of such an unnecessary subterfuge! Besides, Kitty, I could not have made an accomplice of a cow, you know."

"Then," she said, with great dignity, "if you had been a gentleman and a man of honor, you would have cried, 'Unhand me, girl! You are clinging to me under a misunderstanding!'"

SHE

CHESTER, *August* 8.
The Grosvenor.

Jack and I are going over this same ground next summer on our wedding journey. We shall sail for home next week, and we have n't half

done justice to the cathedrals. After the first two, we saw nothing but each other on a general background of architecture. I hope my mind is improved, but oh, I am so hazy about all the facts I have read since I knew Jack! Winchester and Salisbury stand out superbly in my memory. They acquired their ground before it was occupied with other matters. I shall never forget, for instance, that Winchester has the longest spire and Salisbury the highest nave of all the English cathedrals. And I shall never forget so long as I live that Jane Austen and Isaac Newt — Oh dear! was it Isaac Newton or Izaak Walton that was buried in Winchester and Salisbury? To think that that interesting fact should have slipped from my mind, after all the trouble I took with it! But I know that it was Isaac somebody, and that he was buried in — well, he was buried in one of those two places. I am not certain which, but I can ask Jack; he is sure to know.

THE DIARY OF A GOOSE GIRL

To the hens, ducks, and geese
who so kindly gave me
sittings for these
sketches the book
is gratefully
inscribed

THE DIARY OF A GOOSE GIRL

I

THORNYCROFT FARM,
Near Barbury Green,
July 1, 190–.

IN alluding to myself as a Goose Girl, I am using only the most modest of my titles; for I am also a poultry maid, a tender of Belgian hares and rabbits, and a shepherdess; but I particularly fancy the rôle of Goose Girl, because it recalls the German fairy tales of my early youth, when I always yearned, but never hoped, to be precisely what I now am.

As I was jolting along these charming Sussex roads the other day, a fat buff pony and a tippy cart being my manner of progression, I chanced upon the village of Barbury Green.

One glance was enough for any woman, who, having eyes to see, could see with them; but I made assurance doubly sure by driving about a little, struggling to conceal my new-born passion from the stable-boy who was my escort. Then, it being high noon of a cloudless day, I descended from the trap and said to the aston-

ished yokel: "You may go back to the Hydropathic; I am spending a month or two here. Wait a moment — I'll send a message, please!"

I then scribbled a word or two to those having me in custody.

"I am very tired of people," the note ran, "and want to rest myself by living a while with things. Address me (if you must) at Barbury Green post-office, or at all events send me a box of simple clothing there — nothing but shirts and skirts, please. I cannot forget that I am only twenty miles from Oxenbridge (though it might be one hundred and twenty, which is the reason I adore it), but I rely upon you to keep an honorable distance yourselves, and not to divulge my place of retreat to others, especially to — you know whom! Do not pursue me. I will never be taken alive!"

Having cut, thus, the cable that bound me to civilization, and having seen the buff pony and the dazed yokel disappear in a cloud of dust, I looked about me with what Stevenson calls a "fine, dizzy, muddle-headed joy," the joy of a successful rebel or a liberated serf. Plenty of money in my purse — that was unromantic, of course, but it simplified matters — and nine hours of daylight remaining in which to find a lodging.

The village is one of the oldest, and I am sure it must be one of the quaintest, in England.

I looked about me with what Stevenson calls a "fine, dizzy, muddle-headed joy"

It is too small to be printed on the map (an honor that has spoiled more than one Arcadia), so pray do not look there, but just believe in it, and some day you may be rewarded by driving into it by chance, as I did, and feel the same Columbus thrill running, like an electric current, through your veins. I withhold specific geographical information in order that you may not miss that Columbus thrill, which comes too seldom in a world of railroads.

The Green is in the very center of Barbury village, and all civic, political, family, and social life converges there, just at the public duck-pond — a wee, sleepy lake with a slope of grass-covered stones by which the ducks descend for their swim.

The houses are set about the Green like those in a toy village. They are of old brick, with crumpled, up-and-down roofs of deep-toned red, and tufts of stonecrop growing from the eaves. Diamond-paned windows, half open, admit the sweet summer air; and as for the gardens in front, it would seem as if the inhabitants had nothing to do but work in them, there is such a riotous profusion of color and bloom. To add to the effect, there are always pots of flowers hanging from the trees, blue flax and yellow myrtle; and cages of Java sparrows and canaries singing joyously, as well they may in such a paradise.

The shops are idyllic, too, as if Nature had seized even the man of trade and made him subservient to her designs. The general draper's, where I fitted myself out for a day or two quite easily, is set back in a tangle of poppies and sweet peas, Madonna lilies and Canterbury bells. The shop itself has a gay awning, and what do you think the draper has suspended from it, just as a picturesque suggestion to the passer-by? Suggestion I call it, because I should blush to use the word advertisement in describing anything so dainty and decorative. Well, then, garlands of shoes, if you please! Baby bootlets of bronze; tiny ankle-ties in yellow, blue, and scarlet kid; glossy patent-leather pumps shining in the sun, with festoons of slippers at the corners, flowery slippers in imitation Berlin wool-work. If you make this picture in your mind's eye, just add a window above the awning, and over the fringe of marigolds in the window-box put the draper's wife dancing a rosy-cheeked baby. Alas! my words are only black and white, I fear, and this picture needs a palette drenched in primary colors.

Along the street, a short distance, is the old watchmaker's. Set in the hedge at the gate is a glass case with *Multum in Parvo* painted on the woodwork. Within, a little stand of trinkets revolves slowly; as slowly, I imagine, as the current of business in that quiet street. The

house stands a trifle back and is covered thickly with ivy, while over the entrance-door of the shop is a great round clock set in a green frame of clustering vine. The hands pointed to one when I passed the watchmaker's garden with its thicket of fragrant lavender and its murmuring bees; so I went in to the sign of the Strong i' the Arm for some cold luncheon, determining to patronize The Running Footman at the very next opportunity. Neither of these inns is starred by Baedeker, and this fact adds the last touch of enchantment to the picture.

The landlady at the Strong i' the Arm stabbed me in the heart by telling me that there were no apartments to let in the village, and that she had no private sitting-room in the inn; but she speedily healed the wound by saying that I might be accommodated at one of the farmhouses in the vicinity. Did I object to a farm-'ouse? Then she could cheerfully recommend the Evan's farm, only 'alf a mile away. She 'ad understood from Miss Phœbe Evan, who sold her poultry, that they would take one lady lodger if she did n't wish much waiting upon.

In my present mood I was in search of the strenuous life, and eager to wait, rather than to be waited upon; so I walked along the edge of the Green, wishing that some mentally unbalanced householder would take a sudden

fancy to me and ask me to come in and lodge a while. I suppose these families live under their roofs of peach-blow tiles, in the midst of their blooming gardens, for a guinea a week or thereabouts, yet if they "undertook" me (to use their own phrase), the bill for my humble meals and bed would be at least double that. I don't know that I blame them; one should have proper compensation for admitting a world-stained lodger into such an Eden.

When I was searching for rooms a week ago, I chanced upon a pretty cottage where the woman had sometimes let apartments. She showed me the premises and asked me if I would mind taking my meals in her own dining-room, where I could be served privately at certain hours; and, since she had but the one sitting-room, would I allow her to go on using it occasionally? also, if I had no special preference, would I take the second-sized bedroom and leave her in possession of the largest one, which permitted her to have the baby's crib by her bedside? She thought I should be quite as comfortable, and it was her opinion that in making arrangements with lodgers, it was a good plan not to "bryke up the 'ome any more than was necessary."

"Bryke up the 'ome!" That is seemingly the malignant purpose with which I entered Barbury Green.

II

July 4.

ENTER the family of Thornycroft Farm, of which I am already a member in good and regular standing.

I introduce Mrs. Heaven first, for she is a self-saturated person who would never forgive the insult should she receive any lower place.

She welcomed me with the statement: "We do not take lodgers here, nor boarders; no lodgers, nor boarders, but we do occasionally admit paying guests, those who look as if they would appreciate the quietude of the plyce and be willing as you might say to remunerate according."

I did not mind at this particular juncture what I was called, so long as the epithet was comparatively unobjectionable, so I am a paying guest, therefore, and I expect to pay handsomely for the handsome appellation. Mrs. Heaven is short and fat; she fills her dress as a pin-cushion fills its cover; she wears a cap and apron, and she is so full of platitudes that she would have burst had I not appeared as a providential outlet for them. Her accent is not of the farm, but of the town, and smacks wholly of the marts of trade. She is repetitious,

too, as well as platitudinous. "I 'ope if there's anythink you require you will let us know, let us know," she says several times each day; and whenever she enters my sitting-room she prefaces her conversation with the remark: "I trust you are finding it quiet here, miss? It's the quietude of the plyce that is its charm, yes, the quietude. And yet" (she dribbles on) "it wears on a body after a while, miss. I often go into Woodmucket to visit one of my sons just for the noise, simply for the noise, miss, for nothink else in the world but the noise. There's nothink like noise for soothing nerves that is worn threadbare with the quietude, miss, or at least that's my experience; and yet to a strynger the quietude of the plyce is its charm, undoubtedly its chief charm; and that is what our paying guests always say, although our charges are somewhat higher than other plyces. If there's anythink you require, miss, I 'ope you'll mention it. There is not a commodious assortment in Barbury Green, but we can always send the pony to Woodmucket in case of urgency. Our paying guest last summer was a Mrs. Pollock, and she was by way of having sudden fancies. Young and unmarried though you are, miss, I think you will tyke my meaning without my speaking plyner? Well, at six o'clock of a rainy afternoon, she was seized with an unaccountable desire for vegetable

marrows, and Mr. 'Eaven put the pony in the cart and went to Woodmucket for them, which is a great advantage to be so near a town, and yet 'ave the quietude."

Mr. Heaven is merged, like Mr. Jellyby, in the more shining qualities of his wife. A line of description is too long for him. Indeed, I can think of no single word brief enough, at least in English. The Latin "nil" will do, since no language is rich in words of less than three letters. He is nice, kind, bald, timid, thin, and so colorless that he can scarcely be discerned save in a strong light. When Mrs. Heaven goes out into the orchard in search of him, I can hardly help calling from my window, "Bear a trifle to the right, Mrs. Heaven — now to the left — just in front of you now — if you put out your hands you will touch him."

Phœbe, aged seventeen, is the daughter of the house. She is virtuous, industrious, conscientious, and singularly destitute of physical charm. She is more than plain; she looks as if she had been planned without any definite purpose in view, made of the wrong materials, been badly put together, and never properly finished off; but "plain" after all is a relative word. Many a plain girl has been married for her beauty; and now and then a beauty, falling under a cold eye, has been thought plain.

Phœbe has her compensations, for she is

beloved by, and reciprocates the passion of the Woodmancote carrier, Woodmucket being the English manner of pronouncing the place of his abode. If he "carries" as energetically for the great public as he fetches for Phœbe, then he must be a rising and a prosperous man. He brings her daily, wild strawberries, cherries, birds' nests, peacock feathers, sea-shells, green hazel-nuts, samples of hens' food, or bouquets of wilted field flowers tied together tightly and held with a large, moist, loving hand. He has fine curly hair of sandy hue, which forms an aureole on his brow, and a reddish beard, which makes another inverted aureole to match, round his chin. One cannot look at him, especially when the sun shines through him, without thinking how lovely he would be if stuffed and set on wheels, with a little string to drag him about.

Phœbe confided to me that she was on the eve of loving the postman when the carrier came across her horizon.

"It does n't do to be too hysty, does it, miss?" she asked me as we were weeding the onion bed. "I was to give the postman his answer on the Monday night, and it was on the Monday morning that Mr. Gladwish made his first trip here as carrier. I may say I never wyvered from that moment, and no more did he. When I think how near I came to promising the post-

The Woodmancote Carrier

man it gives me a turn." (I can understand that, for I once met the man I nearly promised years before to marry, and we both experienced such a sense of relief at being free instead of bound that we came near falling in love for sheer joy.)

The last and most important member of the household is the Square Baby. His name is Albert Edward, and he is really five years old and no baby at all; but his appearance on this planet was in the nature of a complete surprise to all parties concerned, and he is spoiled accordingly. He has a square head and jaw, square shoulders, square hands and feet. He is red and white and solid and stolid and slow-witted, as the young of his class commonly are, and will make a bulwark of the nation in course of time, I should think; for England has to produce a few thousand such square babies every year for use in the colonies and in the standing army. Albert Edward has already a military gait, and when he has acquired a habit of obedience at all comparable with his power of command, he will be able to take up the white man's burden with distinguished success. Meantime I can never look at him without marveling how the English climate can transmute bacon and eggs, tea and the solid household loaf into such radiant roses and lilies as bloom upon his cheeks and lips.

III

July 8.

THORNYCROFT is by way of being a small poultry farm.

In reaching it from Barbury Green, you take the first left-hand road, go till you drop, and there you are.

It reminds me of my "grandmother's farm at Older." Did you know the song when you were a child? —

My grandmother had a very fine farm
'Way down in the fields of Older.
With a cluck-cluck here,
And a cluck-cluck there,
Here and there a cluck-cluck,
Cluck-cluck here and there,
Down in the fields at Older.

It goes on forever by the simple subterfuge of changing a few words in each verse.

My grandmother had a very fine farm
'Way down in the fields of Older.
With a quack-quack here,
And a quack-quack there,
Here and there a quack-quack,
Quack-quack here and there,
Down in the fields at Older.

This is followed by the gobble-gobble, moo-moo, baa-baa, etc., as long as the laureate's

imagination and the infant's breath hold good. The tune is pretty and I do not know, or did not, when I was young, a more fascinating lyric.

Thornycroft House must have belonged to a country gentleman once upon a time, or to more than one; men who built on a bit here and there once in a hundred years, until finally we have this charmingly irregular and dilapidated whole. You go up three steps into Mrs. Heaven's room, down two into mine, while Phœbe's is up in a sort of turret with long, narrow lattices opening into the creepers. There are crooked little staircases, passages that branch off into other passages and lead nowhere in particular; I can't think of a better house in which to play hide and seek on a wet day. In front, what was once, doubtless, a green, is cut up into greens; to wit, a vegetable garden, where the onions, turnips, and potatoes grow cozily up to the very door-sill; the utilitarian aspect of it all being varied by some scarlet-runners and a scattering of poppies on either side of the path.

The Belgian hares have their habitation in a corner fifty feet distant; one large inclosure for poultry lies just outside the sweetbriar hedge; the others, with all the houses and coops, are in the meadow at the back, where also our tumbler pigeons are kept.

Phœbe attends to the poultry; it is her department. Mr. Heaven has neither the force nor the *finesse* required, and the gentle reader who thinks these qualities unneeded in so humble a calling has only to spend a few days at Thornycroft to be convinced. Mrs. Heaven would be of use, but she is dressing the Square Baby in the morning and putting him to bed at night just at the hours when the feathered young things are undergoing the same operation.

A Goose Girl, like a poet, is sometimes born, sometimes otherwise. I am of the born variety. No training was necessary; I put my head on my pillow as a complicated product of modern civilization on a Tuesday night, and on a Wednesday morning I awoke as a Goose Girl.

My destiny slumbered during the day, but at eight o'clock I heard a terrific squawking in the direction of the duck-ponds, and, aimlessly drifting in that direction, I came upon Phœbe trying to induce ducks and drakes, geese and ganders to retire for the night. They have to be driven into inclosures behind fences of wire netting, fastened into little rat-proof boxes, or shut into separate coops, so as to be safe from their natural enemies, the rats and foxes; which, obeying, I suppose, the law of supply and demand, abound in this neighborhood. The old ganders are allowed their liberty, being of such

age, discretion, sagacity, and pugnacity that they can be trusted to fight their own battles.

The intelligence of hens, though modest, is of such an order that it prompts them to go to bed at a virtuous hour of their own accord; but ducks and geese have to be materially assisted, or I believe they would roam the streets till morning. Never did small boy detest and resist being carried off to his nursery as these dullards, young and old, detest and resist being driven to theirs. Whether they suffer from insomnia, or nightmare, or whether they simply prefer the sweet air of liberty (and death) to the odor of captivity and the coop, I have no means of knowing.

Phœbe stood by one of the duck-ponds, a long pole in her hand, and a helpless expression in that doughlike countenance of hers, where aimless contours and features unite to make a kind of facial blur. (What does the carrier see in it?) The pole was not long enough to reach the ducks, and Phœbe's method lacked spirit and adroitness, so that it was natural, perhaps, that they refused to leave the water, the evening being warm, with an uncommon fine sunset.

I saw the situation at once and ran to meet it with a glow of interest and anticipation. If there is anything in the world I enjoy, it is making somebody do something that he does n't want to do; and if, when victory perches upon

my banner, the somebody can be brought to say that he ought to have done it without my making him, that adds the unforgettable touch to pleasure, though seldom, alas! does it happen. Then ensued the delightful and stimulating hour that has now become a feature of the day; an hour in which the remembrance of the table d'hôte dinner at the Hydro, going on at identically the same time, only stirs me to a keener joy and gratitude.

The ducks swim round in circles, hide under the willows, and attempt to creep into the rat-holes in the banks, a stupidity so crass that it merits instant death, which it somehow always escapes. Then they come out in couples and waddle under the wrong fence into the lower meadow, fly madly under the tool-house, pitch blindly in with the sitting hens, and out again in short order, all the time quacking and squawking, honking and hissing like a bewildered orchestra. By dint of splashing the water with poles, throwing pebbles, beating the shrubs at the ponds' edges, "shooing" frantically with our skirts, crawling beneath bars to head them off, and prodding them from under bushes to urge them on, we finally get the older ones out of the water and the younger ones into some sort of relation to their various retreats; but, owing to their lack of geography, hatred of home, and general recalcitrancy, they none of

them turn up in the right place and have to be sorted out. We uncover the top of the little house, or the inclosure as it may be, or reach in at the door, and, seizing the struggling victim, drag him forth and take him where he should have had the wit to go in the first instance. The weak ones get in with the strong and are in danger of being trampled; two May goslings that look almost full-grown have run into a house with a brood of ducklings a week old. There are twenty-seven crowded into one coop, five in another, nineteen in another; the gosling with one leg has to come out, and the duckling threatened with the gapes; their place is with the "invaleeds," as Phœbe calls them, but they never learn the location of the hospital, nor have the slightest scruple about spreading contagious diseases.

Finally when we have separated and sorted exhaustively, an operation in which Phœbe shows a delicacy of discrimination and a fearlessness of attack amounting to genius, we count the entire number and find several missing. Searching for their animate or inanimate bodies, we "scoop" one from under the toolhouse, chance upon two more who are being harried and pecked by the big geese in the lower meadow, and discover one sailing by himself in solitary splendor in the middle of the deserted pond, a look of evil triumph in his

bead-like eye. Still we lack one young duckling, and he at length is found dead by the hedge. A rat has evidently seized him and choked him at a single throttle, but in such haste that he has not had time to carry away the tiny body.

"Poor think!" says Phœbe tearfully; "it looks as if it was 'it with some kind of a wepping. I don't know whatever to do with the rats, they're gettin' that fearocious!"

Before I was admitted into daily contact with the living goose (my previous intercourse with him having been carried on when gravy and stuffing obscured his true personality), I thought him a very Dreyfus among fowls, a sorely slandered bird to whom justice had never been done; for even the gentle Darwin is hard upon him. My opinion is undergoing some slight modifications, but I withhold judgment at present, hoping that some of the follies, faults, vagaries, and limitations that I observe in Phœbe's geese may be due to Phœbe's educational methods, which were, before my advent, those of the darkest ages.

IV

July 9.

BY the time the ducks and geese are incarcerated for the night, the reasonable, sensible, practical-minded hens — especially those whose mentality is increased and whose virtue is heightened by the responsibilities of motherhood — have gone into their own particular rat-proof boxes, where they are waiting in a semi-somnolent state to have the wire doors closed, the bricks set against them, and the bits of sacking flung over the tops to keep out the draught. We have a great many young families, both ducklings and chicks, but we have no duck mothers at present. The variety of bird which Phœbe seems to have bred during the past year may be called the New Duck, with certain radical ideas about woman's sphere. What will happen to Thornycroft if we develop a New Hen and a New Cow, my imagination fails to conceive. There does not seem to be the slightest danger for the moment, however, and our hens lay and sit and sit and lay as if laying and sitting were the twin purposes of life.

The nature of the hen seems to broaden with the duties of maternity, but I think myself

that we presume a little upon her amiability and natural motherliness. It is one thing to desire a family of one's own, to lay eggs with that idea in view, to sit upon them three long weeks and hatch out and bring up a nice brood of chicks. It must be quite another to have one's eggs abstracted day by day and eaten by a callous public, the nest filled with deceitful substitutes, and at the end of a dull and weary period of hatching to bring into the world another person's children — children, too, of the wrong size, the wrong kind of bills and feet, and, still more subtle grievance, the wrong kind of instincts, leading them to a dangerous aquatic career, one which the mother may not enter to guide, guard, and teach; one on the brink of which she must ever stand, uttering dryshod warnings which are never heeded. They grow used to this strange order of things after a bit, it is true, and are less anxious and excited. When the duck-brood returns safely again and again from what the hen-mother thinks will prove a watery grave, she becomes accustomed to the situation, I suppose. I find that at night she stands by the pond for what she considers a decent, self-respecting length of time, calling the ducklings out of the water; then, if they refuse to come, the mother goes off to bed and leaves them to Providence, or Phœbe.

The brown hen that we have named Cornelia is the best mother, the one who waits longest and most patiently for the web-footed Gracchi to finish their swim.

When a chick is taken out of the incubytor (as Phœbe calls it) and refused by all the other hens, Cornelia generally accepts it, though she had twelve of her own when we began using her as an orphan asylum. "Wings are made to stretch," she seems to say cheerfully, and with a kind glance of her round eye she welcomes the wanderer and the outcast. She even tended for a time the offspring of an absent-minded, light-headed pheasant who flew over a four-foot wall and left her young behind her to starve; it was not a New Pheasant, either; for the most conservative and old-fashioned of her tribe occasionally commits domestic solecisms of this sort.

There is no telling when, where, or how the maternal instinct will assert itself. Among our Thornycroft cats is a certain Mrs. Greyskin. She had not been seen for many days and Mrs. Heaven concluded that she had hidden herself somewhere with a family of kittens; but as the supply of that article with us more than equals the demand, we had not searched for her with especial zeal.

The other day Mrs. Greyskin appeared at the dairy door, and when she had been fed Phœbe

and I followed her stealthily, from a distance. She walked slowly about as if her mind were quite free from harassing care, and finally approached a deserted cow-house where there was a great mound of straw. At this moment she caught sight of us and turned in another direction to throw us off the scent. We persevered in our intention of going into her probable retreat, and were cautiously looking for some sign of life in the haymow, when we heard a soft cackle and a ruffling of plumage. Coming closer to the sound we saw a black hen brooding a nest, her bright bead eyes turning nervously from side to side; and, coaxed out from her protecting wings by youthful curiosity, came four kittens, eyes wide open, warm, happy, ready for sport!

The sight was irresistible, and Phœbe ran for Mr. and Mrs. Heaven and the Square Baby. Mother Hen was not to be embarrassed or daunted, even if her most sacred feelings were regarded in the light of a cheap entertainment. She held her ground while one of the kits slid up and down her glossy back and two others, more timid, crept underneath her breast, only daring to put out their pink noses! We retired then for very shame and met Mrs. Greyskin in the doorway. This should have thickened the plot, but there is apparently no rivalry nor animosity between the co-mothers. We watch

Phœbe and I followed her stealthily

them every day now, through a window in the roof. Mother Greyskin visits the kittens frequently, lies down beside the home nest, and gives them their dinner. While this is going on Mother Blackwing goes modestly away for a bite, a sup, and a little exercise, returning to the kittens when the cat leaves them. It is pretty to see her settle down over the four, fat, furry dumplings, and they seem to know no difference in warmth or comfort, whichever mother is brooding them; while, as their eyes have been open for a week, it can no longer be called a blind error on their part.

When we have closed all our small hen-nurseries for the night there is still the large house inhabited by the thirty-two full-grown chickens which Phœbe calls the broilers. I cannot endure the term and will not use it. "Now for the April chicks," I say every evening.

"Do you mean the broilers?" asks Phœbe.

"I mean the big April chicks," say I.

"Yes, them are the broilers," says she.

But is it not disagreeable enough to be a broiler when one's time comes, without having the gridiron waved in one's face for weeks beforehand?

The April chicks are all lively and desirous of seeing the world as thoroughly as possible before going to roost or broil. As a general

thing, we find in the large house sixteen young fowls of the contemplative, flavorless, resigned-to-the-inevitable variety; three more (the same three every night) perch on the roof and are driven down; four (always the same four) cling to the edge of the open door, waiting to fly off, but not in, when you attempt to close it; nine huddle together on a place in the grass about forty feet distant, where a small coop formerly stood in the prehistoric ages. This small coop was one in which they lodged for a fortnight when they were younger, and when those absolutely indelible impressions are formed of which we read in educational maxims. It was taken away long since, but the nine loyal (or stupid) Casabiancas cling to the sacred spot where its foundations rested; they accordingly have to be caught and deposited bodily in the house, and this requires strategy, as they note our approach from a considerable distance.

Finally all are housed but two, the little white cock and the black pullet, who are still impish and of a wandering mind. Though headed off in every direction, they fly into the hedges and hide in the underbrush. We beat the hedge on the other side, but with no avail. We dive into the thicket of wild roses, sweet-briar, and thistles on our hands and knees, coming out with tangled hair, scratched noses, and no hens. Then, when all has been done that

human ingenuity can suggest, Phœbe goes to her late supper and I do sentry work. I stroll to a safe distance, and, sitting on one of the rat-proof boxes, watch the bushes with an eagle eye. Five minutes go by, ten, fifteen; and then out steps the white cock, stealthily tiptoeing toward the home into which he refused to go at our instigation. In a moment out creeps the obstinate little beast of a black pullet from the opposite clump. The wayward pair meet at their own door, which I have left open a few inches. When all is still I walk gently down the field, and, warned by previous experiences, approach the house from behind. I draw the door to softly and quickly; but not so quickly that the evil-minded and suspicious black pullet has n't time to spring out, with a make-believe squawk of fright that induces three other blameless chickens to fly down from their perches and set the whole flock in a flutter. Then I fall from grace and call her a Broiler; and when, after some minutes of hot pursuit, I catch her by falling over her in the corner by the goose-pen, I address her as a fat, juicy Broiler with parsley butter and a bit of bacon.

V

July 10.

AT ten-thirty or so in the morning the cackling begins. I wonder exactly what it means! Have the forest-lovers who listen so respectfully to, and interpret so exquisitely, the notes of birds — have none of them made psychological investigations of the hen cackle? Can it be simple elation? One could believe that of the first few eggs, but a hen who has laid two or three hundred can hardly feel the same exuberant pride and joy daily. Can it be the excitement incident to successful achievement? Hardly, because the task is so extremely simple. Eggs are more or less alike; a little larger or smaller, a trifle whiter or browner; and almost sure to be quite right as to details; that is, the big end never gets confused with the little end, they are always ovoid and never spherical, and the yolk is always inside of the white. As for a soft-shelled egg, it is so rare an occurrence that the fear of laying one could not set the whole race of hens in a panic; so there really cannot be any intellectual or emotional agitation in producing a thing that might be made by a machine. Can it be simply "fussiness"; since the people who have the

least to do commonly make the most flutter about doing it?

Perhaps it is merely conversation. "*Cut-cut-cut-cut-cut*-DAH*cut!* . . . I have finished my strictly fresh egg, have you laid yours? Make haste, then, for the cock has found a gap in the wire-fence and wants us to wander in the strawberry-bed . . . *Cut-cut-cut-cut-cut*-DAH*cut!* . . . Every moment is precious, for the Goose Girl will find us, when she gathers the strawberries for her luncheon. . . . *Cut-cut-cut-cut!* On the way out we can find sweet places to steal nests. . . . *Cut-cut-cut!* . . . I am so glad I am not sitting this heavenly morning; it *is* a dull life!"

A Lancashire poultry man drifted into Barbury Green yesterday. He is an old acquaintance of Mr. Heaven and spent the night and part of the next day at Thornycroft Farm. He possessed a deal of fowl philosophy and tells many a good hen story, which, like fish stories, draw rather largely on the credulity of the audience. We were sitting in the rick-yard talking comfortably about laying and cackling and kindred matters when he took his pipe from his mouth and told us the following tale, — not a bad one if you can translate the dialect:

"Aw were once towd as, if yo' could only get th' hen's egg away afooar she hed sin it, th' hen 'ud think it hed med a mistek an' sit deawn ageean an' lay another.

"An' it seemed to me it were a varra sensible way o' lukkin' at it. Sooa aw set to wark to mek a nest as 'ud tek a rise eawt o' th' hens. An' aw dud it too. Aw med a nest wi' a fause bottom, th' idea bein' as when a hen hed laid, th' egg 'ud drop through into a box underneyth.

"Aw felt varra preawd o' that nest, too, aw con tell yo', an' aw remember aw felt quite excited when aw see an awd black Minorca, th' best layer as aw hed, gooa an' settle hersel deawn i' th' nest an' get ready for wark. Th' hen seemed quite comfortable enough, aw were glad to see, an' geet through th' operation beawt ony seemin' trouble.

"Well, aw darsay yo' know heaw a hen carries on as soon as it's laid a egg. It starts 'chuckin'' away like a showman's racket, an' after tekkin' a good luk at th' egg to see whether it's a big 'un or a little 'un, gooas eawt an' tells all t' other hens abeawt it.

"Neaw, this black Minorca, as aw sed, were a owdish bird, an' maybe knew mooar than aw thowt. Happen it hed laid on a nest wi' a fause bottom afooar, an' were up to th' trick, but whether or not, aw never see a hen luk mooar disgusted i' mi life when it lukked i' th' nest an' see as it hed hed all that trouble fer nowt.

"It woked reawnd th' nest as if it could n't believe its own eyes.

"But it dud n't do as aw expected. Aw ex-

pected as it 'ud sit deawn ageean an' lay another.

"But it just gi'e one wonderin' sooart o' chuck, an' then, after a long stare reawnd th' hen-coyt, it woked eawt, as mad a hen as aw 've ever sin. Aw fun eawt after, what th' long stare meant. It were tekkin' farewell! For if yo'll believe me that hen never laid another egg i' ony o' my nests.

"Varra like it laid away in a spot wheear it could hev summat to luk at when it hed done wark for th' day.

"Sooa aw lost mi best layer through mi actin', an' aw 've never invented owt sen."

VI

ONE learns to be modest by living on a poultry farm, for there are constant expositions of the most deplorable vanity among the cocks. We have a couple of pea-fowl who certainly are an addition to the landscape, as they step mincingly along the square of turf we dignify by the name of lawn. The head of the house has a most languid and self-conscious strut and his microscopic mind is fixed entirely on his splendid trailing tail. If I could only master his language sufficiently to tell him how hideously ugly the back view of this gorgeous fan is, when he spreads it for the edification of the observer in front of him, he would of course retort that there is a "congregation side" to everything, but I should at least force him into a defense of his tail and a confession of its limitations. This would be new and unpleasant, I fancy, and if it produced no perceptible effect upon his super-arrogant demeanor, I might remind him that he is likely to be used, eventually, for a feather duster, unless, indeed, the Heavens are superstitious and prefer to throw his tail away, rather than bring ill luck and the evil eye into the house.

The longer I study the cock, whether Black Spanish, White Leghorn, Dorking, or the common barnyard fowl, the more intimately I am acquainted with him, the less I am impressed with his character. He has more pride of bearing, and less to be proud of, than any bird I know. He is indolent, though he struts pompously over the grass as if the day were all too short for his onerous duties. He calls the hens about him when I throw corn from the basket, but many a time I have seen him swallow hurriedly, and in private, some dainty titbit he has found unexpectedly. He has no particular chivalry. He gives no special encouragement to his hen when he becomes a prospective father, and renders little assistance when the responsibilities become actualities. His only personal message or contribution to the world is his raucous cock-a-doodle-doo, which, being uttered most frequently at dawn, is the most ill-timed and offensive of all musical notes. It is so unnecessary too, as if the day did n't come soon enough without his warning; but I suppose he is anxious to waken his hens and get them at their daily task, and so he disturbs the entire community. In short, I dislike him; his swagger, his autocratic strut, his greed, his irritating self-consciousness, his endless parading of himself up and down in a procession of one.

Of course his character is largely the result of

polygamy. His weaknesses are only what might be expected; and as for the hens, I have considerable respect for the patience, sobriety, and dignity with which they endure an institution particularly offensive to all women. In their case they do not even have the sustaining thought of its being an article of religion, so they are to be complimented the more.

There is nothing on earth so feminine as a hen — not womanly, simply feminine. Those men of insight who write the Woman's Page in the Sunday newspapers study hens more than women, I sometimes think; at any rate, their favorite types are all present on this poultry farm.

Some families of White Leghorns spend most of their time in the rick-yard, where they look extremely pretty, their slender white shapes and red combs and wattles well set off by the background of golden hayricks. There is a great oak-tree in one corner, with a tall ladder leaning against its trunk, and a capital roosting-place on a long branch running at right angles with the ladder. I try to spend a quarter of an hour there every night before supper, just for the pleasure of seeing the feathered "women-folks" mount that ladder.

A dozen of them surround the foot, waiting restlessly for their turn. One little white lady flutters up on the lowest round and perches

there until she reviews the past, faces the present, and forecasts the future; during which time she is gathering courage for the next jump. She cackles, takes up one foot and then the other, tilts back and forth, holds up her skirts and drops them again, cocks her head nervously to see whether they are all staring at her below, gives half a dozen preliminary springs which mean nothing, declares she can't and won't go up any faster, unties her bonnet strings and pushes back her hair, pulls down her dress to cover her toes, and finally alights on the next round, swaying to and fro until she gains her equilibrium, when she proceeds to enact the same scene over again.

All this time the hens at the foot of the ladder are criticizing her methods and exclaiming at the length of time she requires in mounting; while the cocks stroll about the yard keeping one eye on the ladder, picking up a seed here and there, and giving a masculine sneer now and then at the too-familiar scene. They approach the party at intervals, but only to remark that it always makes a man laugh to see a woman go up a ladder. The next hen, stirred to the depths by this speech, flies up entirely too fast, loses her head, tumbles off the top round, and has to make the ascent over again. Thus it goes on and on, this *petite comédie humaine*, and I could enjoy it with my whole heart if Mr. Heaven did

not insist on sharing the spectacle with me. He is so inexpressibly dull, so destitute of humor, that I did not think it likely he would see in the performance anything more than a flock of hens going up a ladder to roost. But he did; for there is no man so blind that he cannot see the follies of women; and, when he forgot himself so far as to utter a few genial, silly, well-worn reflections upon femininity at large, I turned upon him and revealed to him some of the characteristics of his own sex, gained from an exhaustive study of the barn-yard fowl of the masculine gender. He went into the house discomfited, though chuckling a little at my vehemence; but at least I have made it forever impossible for him to watch his hens without an occasional glance at the cocks.

VII

July 12.

OH! the pathos of a poultry farm! Catherine of Aragon, the black Spanish hen that stole her nest, brought out nine chicks this morning, and the businesslike and marble-hearted Phœbe has taken them away and given them to another hen who has only seven. Two mothers cannot be wasted on these small families — it would not be profitable; and the older mother, having been tried and found faithful over seven, has been given the other nine and accepted them. What of the bereft one? She is miserable and stands about moping and forlorn, but it is no use fighting against the inevitable; hens' hearts must obey the same laws that govern the rotation of crops. Catherine of Aragon feels her lot a bitter one just now, but in time she will succumb, and lay, which is more to the point.

We have had a very busy evening, beginning with the rats' supper — delicate sandwiches of bread and butter spread with Paris green.

We have a new brood of seventeen ducklings just hatched this afternoon. When we came to the nest the yellow and brown bunches of down and fluff were peeping out from under

the hen's wings in the prettiest fashion in the world.

"It's a noble hen!" I said to Phœbe.

"She ain't so nowble as she looks," Phœbe answered grimly. "It was another 'en that brooded these eggs for near on three weeks and then this big one come along with a fancy she'd like a family 'erself if she could steal one without too much trouble; so she drove the rightful 'en off the nest, finished up the last few days, and 'ere she is in possession of the ducklings!"

"Why don't you take them away from her and give them back to the first hen, who did most of the work?" I asked, with some spirit.

"Like as not she would n't tyke them now," said Phœbe, as she lifted the hen off the broken egg-shells and moved her gently into a clean box, on a bed of fresh hay. We put food and drink within reach of the family, and very proud and handsome that highway robber of a hen looked, as she stretched her wings over the seventeen easily earned ducklings.

Going back to the old nesting-box, I found one egg forgotten among the shells. It was still warm, and I took it up to run across the field with it to Phœbe. It was heavy, and the carrying of it was a queer sensation, inasmuch as it squirmed and "yipped" vociferously in transit, threatening so unmistakably to hatch in my hand that I was decidedly nervous. The

intrepid little youngster burst his shell as he touched Phœbe's apron, and has become the strongest and handsomest of the brood.

All this tending of downy young things, this feeding and putting to bed, this petting and nursing and rearing, is such pretty, comforting woman's work. I am sure Phœbe will make a better wife to the carrier for having been a poultry maid, and though good enough for most practical purposes when I came here, I am an infinitely better woman now. I am afraid I was not particularly nice the last few days at the Hydro. Such a lot of dull, prosy, inquisitive, bothering old tabbies! Aunt Margaret furnishing imaginary symptoms enough to keep a fond husband and two trained nurses distracted; a man I had never encouraged in my life coming to stay in the neighborhood and turning up daily for rejection; another man taking rooms at the very hotel with the avowed purpose of making my life a burden; and on the heels of both, a widow of thirty-five in full chase! Small wonder I thought it more dignified to retire than to compete, and so I did.

I need not, however, have cut the threads that bound me to Oxenbridge with such particularly sharp scissors, nor given them such a vicious snap; for, so far as I can observe, the little world of which I imagined myself the sun continues to revolve, and, probably, about some

other center. I can well imagine who has taken up that delightful but somewhat exposed and responsible position — it would be just like her!

I am perfectly happy where I am; it is not that; but it seems so strange that they can be perfectly happy without me, after all that they — after all that was said on the subject not many days ago. Nothing turns out as one expects. There have been no hot pursuits, no rewards offered, no bills posted, no printed placards issued describing the beauty and charms of a young person who supposed herself the cynosure of every eye. Heigh ho! What does it matter, after all? One can always be a Goose Girl!

. . . . . .

I wonder if the hen mother is quite, quite satisfied with her ducklings! Do you suppose the fact of hatching and brooding them breaks down all the sense of difference? Does she not sometimes reflect that if her children were the ordinary sort, and not these changelings, she would be enjoying certain pretty little attentions dear to a mother's heart? The chicks would be pecking the food off her broad beak with their tiny ones, and jumping on her back to slide down her glossy feathers. They would be far nicer to cuddle, too, so small and graceful and light; the changelings are a trifle solid and

brawny. And personally, just as a matter of taste, would she not prefer wee, round, glancing heads, and pointed beaks, peeping from under her wings, to these teaspoon-shaped things larger than her own? I wonder!

We are training fourteen large young chickens to sit on the perches in their new house, instead of huddling together on the floor as has been their habit, because we discover rat-holes under the wire flooring occasionally, and fear that toes may be bitten. At nine o'clock Phœbe and I lift the chickens one by one, and, as it were, glue them to their perches, squawking. Three nights have we gone patiently through with this performance, but they have not learned the lesson. The ducks and geese are, however, greatly improved by the application of advanced educational methods, and the *régime* of perfect order and system instituted by Me begins to show results.

There is no more violent splashing and pebbling, racing, chasing, separating. The pole, indeed, still has to be produced, but at the first majestic wave of my hand they scuttle toward the shore. The geese turn to the right, cross the rick-yard and go to their pen; the May ducks turn to the left for their coops, the June ducks follow the hens to the top meadow, and even the idiot gosling has an inspiration now and then and stumbles on his own habitation.

Mrs. Heaven has no reverence for the principles of Comenius, Pestalozzi, or Herbert Spencer as applied to poultry, and when the ducks and geese came out of the pond badly the other night and went waddling and tumbling and hissing all over creation, did not approve of my sending them back into the pond to start afresh.

"I consider it a great waste of time, of good time, miss," she said; "and, after all, do you consider that educated poultry will be any better eating, or that it will lay more than one egg a day, miss?"

I have given the matter some attention, and I fear Mrs. Heaven is right. A duck, a goose, or a hen in which I have developed a larger brain, implanted a sense of duty, or instilled an idea of self-government, is likely, on the whole, to be leaner, not fatter. There is nothing like obeying the voice of conscience for taking the flesh off one's bones; and, speaking of conscience, Phœbe, whose metaphysics are of the farm farmy, says that hers "felt like a hunlaid hegg for dyes" after she had jilted the postman.

As to the eggs, I am sure the birds will go on laying one a day, for 't is their nature to. Whether the product of the intelligent, conscious, logical fowl will be as rich in quality as that of the uneducated and barbaric bird, I cannot say; but it ought at least to be equal to the Denmark egg eaten now by all Londoners; and

if, perchance, left uneaten, it is certain to be a very superior wife and mother.

While we are discussing the subject of educating poultry, I confess that the case of Cannibal Ann gives me much anxiety. Twice in her short career has she been under suspicion of eating her own eggs, but Phœbe has never succeeded in catching her *in flagrante delicto*. That eminent detective service was reserved for me, and I have been haunted by the picture ever since. It is an awful sight to witness a hen gulp her own newly laid fresh egg, yolk, white, shell, and all; to realize that you have fed, sheltered, chased, and occasionally run in, a being possessed of no moral sense, a being likely to set a bad example, inculcate vicious habits among her innocent sisters, and lower the standard of an entire poultry yard. The Young Poultry Keeper's Friend gives us no advice on this topic, and we do not know whether to treat Cannibal Ann as the victim of a disease, or as a confirmed criminal; whether to administer remedies, or cut her off in the flower of her youth.

We have had a sad scene to-night. A chick has been ailing all day, and when we shut up the brood we found him dead in a corner.

Phœbe put him on the ground while she busied herself about the coop. The other chicks came out and walked about the dead one again and again, eyeing him curiously.

"Poor little chap!" said Phœbe. "'E's never 'ad a mother! 'E was an incubytor chicken, and wherever I took 'im 'e was picked at. There was somethink wrong with 'im; 'e never was a fyvorite!"

I put the fluffy body into a hole in the turf, and strewed a handful of grass over him. "Sad little epitaph!" I thought. "He never was a fyvorite!"

VIII

July 13.

I LIKE to watch the Belgian hares eating their trifolium or pea-pods or grass; graceful, gentle things they are, crowding about Mr. Heaven, and standing prettily, not greedily, on their hind legs, to reach for the clover, their delicate nostrils and whiskers all a-quiver with excitement.

As I look out of my window in the dusk I can see one of the mothers galloping across the inclosure, the soft white lining of her tail acting as a beacon-light to the eight infant hares following her, a quaint procession of eight white spots in a glancing line. In the darkest night those baby creatures could follow their mother through grass or hedge or thicket, and she would need no warning note to show them where to flee in case of danger. "All you have to do is to follow the white night-light that I keep in the lining of my tail," she says, when she is giving her first maternal lectures; and it seems a beneficent provision of Nature. To be sure, Mr. Heaven took his gun and went out to shoot wild rabbits today, and I noted that he marked them by those same self-betraying tails, as they scuttled toward their holes or leaped toward the protecting

cover of the hedge; so it does not appear whether Nature is on the side of the farmer or the rabbit. . . .

There is as much comedy and as much tragedy in poultry life as anywhere, and already I see rifts within lutes. We have in a cage a French gentleman partridge married to a Hungarian lady of defective sight. He paces back and forth in the pen restlessly, anything but content with the domestic fireside. One can see plainly that he is devoted to the Boulevards, and that if left to his own inclinations he would never have chosen any spouse but a thorough Parisienne.

The Hungarian lady is blind of one eye, from some stray shot, I suppose. She is melancholy at all times and occasionally goes so far as to beat her head against the wire netting. If liberated, Mr. Heaven says that her blindness would only expose her to death at the hands of the first sportsman, and it always seems to me as if she knows this, and is ever trying to decide whether a loveless marriage is any better than the tomb.

Then, again, the great, gray gander is, for some mysterious reason, out of favor with the entire family. He is a noble and amiable bird, by far the best all-round character in the flock, for dignity of mien and large-minded common sense. What is the treatment vouchsafed to this

blameless husband and father? One that puts anybody out of sorts with virtue and its scant rewards. To begin with, the others will not allow him to go into the pond. There is an organized cabal against it, and he sits solitary on the bank, calm and resigned, but, naturally, a trifle hurt. His favorite retreat is a tiny sort of island on the edge of the pool under the alders, where with his bent head, and red-rimmed philosophic eyes he regards his own breast and dreams of happier days. When the others walk into the country twenty-three of them keep together, and Burd Alane (as I have named him from the old ballad) walks by himself. The lack of harmony is so evident here, and the slight so intentional and direct, that it almost moves me to tears. The others walk soberly, always in couples, but even Burd Alane's rightful spouse is on the side of the majority, and avoids her consort.

What is the nature of his offense? There can be no connubial jealousies, I judge, as geese are strictly monogamous, and having chosen a partner of their joys and sorrows they cleave to each other until death or some other inexorable circumstance does them part. If they are ever mistaken in their choice and think they might have done better, the world is none the wiser. Burd Alane looks in good condition, but Phœbe thinks he is not quite himself, and that some day when he is in greater strength he will turn on

his foes and rend them, regaining thus his lost prestige, for formerly he was king of the flock.

. . . . . .

Phœbe has not a vestige of sentiment. She just asked me if I would have a duckling or a gosling for dinner; that there were two quite ready — the brown and yellow duckling that is the last to leave the water at night, and the white gosling that never knows his own 'ouse. Which would I 'ave, and would I 'ave it with sage and onion?

Now, had I found a duckling on the table at dinner I should have eaten it without thinking at all, or with the thought that it had come from Barbury Green. But eat a duckling that I have stoned out of the pond, pursued up the bank, chased behind the wire netting, caught, screaming, in a corner and carried struggling to his bed? Feed upon an idiot gosling that I have found in nine different coops on nine successive nights — in with the newly hatched chicks, the half-grown pullets, the sitting hen, the "invaleed goose," the drake with the gapes, the old ducks in the pen? — Eat a gosling that I have caught and put in with his brothers and sisters (whom he never recognizes) so frequently and regularly that I am familiar with every joint in his body?

In the first place, with my own small bump of locality and lack of geography, I would never willingly consume a creature who might, by

some strange process of assimilation, make me worse in this respect; in the second place, I should have to be ravenous indeed to sit down deliberately and make a meal of an intimate friend, no matter if I had not a high opinion of his intelligence. I should as soon think of eating the Square Baby, stuffed with sage and onion and garnished with green-apple sauce, as the yellow duckling or the idiot gosling.

Mrs. Heaven has just called me into her sitting-room ostensibly to ask me to order breakfast, but really for the pleasure of conversation. Why she should inquire whether I would relish some gammon of bacon with eggs, when she knows that there has not been, is not now, and never will be, anything but gammon of bacon with eggs, is more than I can explain.

"Would you like to see my flowers, miss?" she asks, folding her plump hands over her white apron. "They are looking beautiful this morning. I am so fond of potted plants, of plants in pots. Look at these geraniums! Now, I consider that pink one a perfect bloom; yes, a perfect bloom. This is a fine red one, is it not, miss? Especially fine, don't you think? The trouble with the red variety is that they're apt to get 'bobby' and have to be washed regularly; quite bobby they do get indeed, I assure you. That white one has just gone out of blossom, and

it was really wonderful. You could 'ardly have told it from a paper flower, miss, not from a white paper flower. My plants are my children nowadays, since Albert Edward is my only care. I have been the mother of eleven children, miss, all of them living, so far as I know; I know nothing to the contrary. I 'ope you are not wearying of this solitary place, miss? It will grow upon you, I am sure, as it did upon Mrs. Pollock, with all her peculiar fancies, and as it 'as grown upon us. — We formerly had a butcher's shop in Buffington, and it was naturally a great responsibility. Mr. Heaven's nerves are not strong, and at last he wanted a life of more quietude, more quietude was what he craved. The life of a retail butcher is a most exciting and wearying one. Nobody satisfied with their meat; as if it mattered in a world of change! Everybody complaining of too much bone or too little fat; nobody wishing tough chops or cutlets, but always seeking after fine joints, when it's against reason and nature that all joints should be juicy and all cutlets tender; always complaining if livers are not sent with every fowl, always asking you to remember the trimmin's, always wanting their beef well 'ung, and then if you 'ang it a minute too long it's left on your 'ands! I often used to say to Mr. Heaven, yes, many's the time I've said it, that if people would think more of the great 'ereafter and less about their

own little stomachs, it would be a deal better for them, yes, a deal better, and make it much more comfortable for the butchers!"

. . . . . .

Burd Alane has had a good quarter of an hour to-day.

His spouse took a brief promenade with him. To be sure, it was during an absence of the flock on the other side of the hedge, so that the moral effect of her spasm of wifely loyalty was quite lost upon them. I strongly suspect that she would not have granted anything but a secret interview. What a petty, weak, ignoble character! I really don't like to think so badly of any fellow creature as I am forced to think of that politic, time-serving, pusillanimous goose. I believe she laid the egg that produced the idiot gosling!

IX

HERE follows the true story of Sir Muscovy Drake, the Lady Blanche, and Miss Mallardina Crippletoes.

Phœbe's flock consisted at first mostly of Brown Mallards, but a friend gave her a sitting of eggs warranted to produce a most beautiful variety of white ducks. They were hatched in due time, but proved hard to raise, till at length there was only one survivor, of such uncommon grace and beauty that we called her the Lady Blanche. Presently a neighbor sold Phœbe his favorite Muscovy drake, and these two splendid creatures by "natural selection" disdained to notice the rest of the flock, but forming a close friendship, wandered in the pleasant paths of duckdom together, swimming and eating quite apart from the others.

In the brown flock there was one unfortunate, misshapen from the egg, quite lame, and with no smoothness of plumage; but on that very account, apparently, or because she was too weak to resist them, the others treated her cruelly, biting her and pushing her away from the food.

One day it happened that the two ducks — Sir Muscovy and Lady Blanche — had come up

from the water before the others, and having taken their repast were sitting together under the shade of a flowering currant-bush, when they chanced to see poor Miss Crippletoes very badly used and crowded away from the dish. Sir Muscovy rose to his feet; a few rapid words seemed to pass between him and his mate, and then he fell upon the other drake and the heartless minions who had persecuted the helpless one, drove them far away out of sight, and, returning, went to the corner where the victim was cowering, her face to the wall. He seemed to whisper to her, or in some way to convey to her a sense of protection; for after a few moments she tremblingly went with him to the dish, and hurriedly ate her dinner while he stood by, repulsing the advances of the few brown ducks who remained near and seemed inclined to attack her.

When she had eaten enough Lady Blanche joined them and they went down the hill together to their favorite swimming-place. After that, Miss Crippletoes always followed a little behind her protectors, and thus shielded and fed she grew stronger and well-feathered, though she was always smaller than she should have been and had a lowly manner, keeping a few steps in the rear of her superiors and sitting at some distance from their noon resting-place.

Phœbe noticed after a while that Lady

Blanche was seldom to be seen, and Sir Muscovy and Miss Crippletoes often came to their meals without her. The would-be mother refused to inhabit the house Phœbe had given her, and for a long time the place she had chosen for her sitting could not be found. At length the Square Baby discovered her in a most ideal spot. A large boulder had dropped years ago into the brook that fills our duck-pond; dropped and split in halves with the two smooth walls leaning away from each other. A grassy bank towered behind, and on either side of the opening, tall bushes made a miniature forest where the romantic mother could brood her treasures while her two guardians enjoyed the water close by her retreat.

All this happened before my coming to Thornycroft Farm, but it was I who named the hero and heroines of the romance when Phœbe had told me all the particulars. Yesterday morning I was sitting by my open window. It was warm, sunny, and still, but in the country sounds travel far, and I could hear fowl conversation in various parts of the poultry yard as well as in all the outlying bits of territory occupied by our feathered friends. Hens have only three words and a scream in their language, but ducks, having more thoughts to express, converse quite fluently, so fluently, in fact, that it reminds me of dinner at the Hydropathic Hotel.

I fancy I have learned to distinguish seven separate sounds, each varied by degrees of intensity, and with upward or downward inflections like the Chinese tongue.

In the distance, then, I heard the faint voice of a duck calling as if breathless and excited. While I wondered what was happening, I saw Miss Crippletoes struggling up the steep bank above the duck-pond. It was the quickest way from the water to the house, but difficult for the little lame webbed feet. When she reached the level grass sward she sank down a moment, exhausted; but when she could speak again she cried out, a sharp staccato call, and ran forward.

Instantly she was answered from a distant knoll, where for some reason Sir Muscovy loved to retire for meditation. The cries grew lower and softer as the birds approached each other, and they met at the corner just under my window. Instantly they put their two bills together and the loud cries changed to confiding murmurs. Evidently some hurried questions and answers passed between them, and then Sir Muscovy waddled rapidly by the quickest path, Miss Crippletoes following him at a slower pace, and both passed out of sight, using their wings to help their feet down the steep declivity. The next morning, when I wakened early, my first thought was to look out, and there on the sunny

greensward where they were accustomed to be fed, Sir Muscovy, Lady Blanche, and their humble maid, Mallardina Crippletoes, were scattering their own breakfast before the bills of twelve beautiful golden balls of ducklings. The little creatures could never have climbed the bank, but must have started from their nest at dawn, coming round by the brook to the level at the foot of the garden, and so by slow degrees up to the house.

Judging from what I heard and knew of their habits I am sure the excitement of the previous morning was occasioned by the hatching of the eggs, and that Lady Blanche had hastily sent her friend to call Sir Muscovy, the family remaining together until they could bring the babies with them and display their beauty to Phœbe and me.

X

July 14.

WE are not wholly without the pleasures of the town in Barbury Green. Once or twice in a summer, late on a Saturday afternoon, a procession of red and yellow vans drives into a field near the center of the village. By the time the vans are unpacked all the children in the community are surrounding the gate of entrance. There is rifle-shooting, there is fortune-telling, there are games of pitch and toss, and swings, and French bagatelle; and, to crown all, a wonderful orchestrion that goes by steam. The water is boiled for the public's tea, and at the same time thrilling strains of melody are flung into the air. There is at present only one tune in the orchestrion's repertory, but it is a very good tune; though after hearing it three hundred and seven times in a single afternoon it pursues one, sleeping and waking, for the next week. Phœbe and I took the Square Baby and went in to this diversified entertainment. There was a small crowd of children at the entrance, but as none of them seemed to be provided with pennies, and I felt in a fairy godmother mood, I offered them the freedom of the place at my expense. I never purchased more radiant good-

will for less money, but the combined effect of the well-boiled tea and the boiling orchestrion produced many village nightmares, so the mothers told me at chapel next morning.

. . . . . .

I have many friends in Barbury Green, and often have a pleasant chat with the draper, and the watchmaker, and the chemist.

The last house on the principal street is rather an ugly one, with especially nice window curtains. As I was taking my daily walk to the post-office (an entirely unfruitful expedition thus far, as nobody has taken the pains to write to me) I saw a nursemaid coming out of the gate, wheeling a baby in a perambulator. She was going placidly away from the Green when, far in the distance, she espied a man walking rapidly toward us, a heavy Gladstone bag in one hand. She gazed fixedly for a moment, her eyes brightening and her cheeks flushing with pleasure, — whoever it was, it was an unexpected arrival; — then she retraced her steps and, running up the garden-path, opened the front door and held an excited colloquy with somebody; a slender somebody in a nice print gown and neatly dressed hair, who came to the gate and peeped beyond the hedge several times, drawing back between peeps with smiles and heightened color. She did not run down the road, even when she had satisfied herself of

the identity of the traveler; perhaps that would not have been good form in an English village, for there were houses on the opposite side of the way. She waited until he opened the gate, the nursemaid took the bag and looked discreetly into the hedge, then the mistress slipped her hand through the traveler's arm and walked up the path as if she had nothing else in the world to wish for. The nurse had a part in the joy, for she lifted the baby out of the perambulator and showed proudly how much he had grown.

It was a dear little scene, and I, a passer-by, had shared in it and felt better for it. I think their content was no less because part of it had enriched my life, for happiness, like mercy, is twice blessed; it blesses those who are most intimately associated in it, and it blesses all those who see it, hear it, feel it, touch it, or breathe the same atmosphere. A laughing, crowing baby in a house, one cheerful woman singing about her work, a boy whistling at the plough, a romance just suspected, with its miracle of two hearts melting into one — the wind's always in the west when you have any of these wonder-workers in your neighborhood.

I have talks too, sometimes, with the old parson, who lives in a quaint house with "*Parva Domus Magna Quies*" cut into the stone over the doorway. He is not a preaching parson, but

a retired one, almost the nicest kind, I often think.

He has been married thirty years, he tells me; thirty years, spent in the one little house with the bricks painted red and gray alternately, and the scarlet hollyhocks growing under the windows. I am sure they have been sweet, true, kind years, and that his heart must be a quiet, peaceful place just like his house and garden.

"I was only eleven years old when I fell in love with my wife," he told me as we sat on the seat under the lime tree; he puffing cozily at his pipe, I plaiting grasses for a hatband.

"It was just before Sunday-School. Her mother had dressed her all in white muslin like a fairy, but she had stepped on the edge of a puddle, and some of the muddy water had bespattered her frock. A circle of children had surrounded her, and some of the motherly little girls were on their knees rubbing at the spots anxiously, while one of them wiped away the tears that were running down her pretty cheeks. I looked! It was fatal! I did not look again, but I was smitten to the very heart! I did not speak to her for six years, but when I did, it was all right with both of us,thank God! and I've been in love with her ever since, when she behaves herself!"

That is the way they speak of love in Barbury Green, and oh! how much sweeter and more

wholesome it is than the language of the town! Who would not be a Goose Girl, "to win the secret of the weed's plain heart?" It seems to me that in society we are always gazing at magic-lantern shows, but here we rest our tired eyes with looking at the stars.

XI

July 16.

PHŒBE and I have been to a Hen Conference at Buffington. It was for the purpose of raising the standard of the British Hen, and our local Countess, who is much interested in poultry, was in the chair.

It was a very learned body, but Phœbe had coached me so well that at the noon recess I could talk confidently with the members, discussing the various advantages of True and Crossed Minorcas, Feverels, Andalusians, Cochin Chinas, Shanghais, and the White Leghorn. (Phœbe, when she pronounces this word, leaves out the "h" and bears down heavily on the last syllable, so that it rhymes with begone!)

As I was sitting under the trees waiting for Phœbe to finish some shopping in the village, a traveling poultry-dealer came along and offered to sell me a silver Wyandotte pullet and cockerel. This was a new breed to me and I asked the price, which proved to be more than I should pay for a hat in Bond Street. I hesitated, thinking meantime what a delightful parting gift they would be for Phœbe; I mean if we ever should part, which seems more and more unlikely, as I shall never leave Thornycroft until

somebody comes properly to fetch me; indeed, unless the "fetching" is done somewhat speedily I may decline to go under any circumstances. My indecision as to the purchase was finally banished when the poultry man asserted that the fowls had clear open centers all over, black lacing entirely round the white centers, were free from white edging, and each had a cherry-red eye. This catalogue of charms inflamed my imagination, though it gave me no mental picture of a silver Wyandotte fowl, and I paid the money while the dealer crammed the chicks, squawking, into my five o'clock tea-basket.

The afternoon session of the conference was most exciting, for we reached the subject of imported eggs, an industry that is assuming terrifying proportions. The London hotel egg comes from Denmark, it seems, — I should think by sailing vessel, not steamer, but I may be wrong. After we had settled that the British Hen should be protected and encouraged, and agreed solemnly to abstain from Danish eggs in any form, and made a resolution stating that our loyalty to Queen Alexandra would remain undiminished, we argued the subject of hen diet. There was a great difference of opinion here and the discussion was heated; the honorary treasurer standing for pulped mangold and flint grit, the chair insisting on barley meal and randans, while

one eloquent young woman declared, to loud cries of "'Ear, 'ear!" that rice pudding and bone chips produce more eggs to the square hen than any other sort of food. Impassioned orators arose here and there in the audience demanding recognition for beef scraps, charcoal, round corn or buckwheat. Foods were regarded from various standpoints: as general invigorators, growth assisters, and egg producers. A very handsome young farmer carried off final honors and proved to the satisfaction of all the feminine poultry raisers that green young hog bones fresh cut in the Banner Bone Breaker (of which he was the agent) possessed a nutritive value not to be expressed in human language.

Phœbe was distinctly nervous when I rose to say a few words on poultry breeding, announcing as my topic "Mothers, Stepmothers, Foster-Mothers, and Incubators." Protected by the consciousness that no one in the assemblage could possibly know me, I made a distinct success in my maiden speech; indeed, I somewhat overshot the mark, for the Countess in the chair sent me a note asking me to dine with her that evening. I suppressed the note and took Phœbe away before the proceedings were finished, vanishing from the scene of my triumphs like a veiled prophet.

Just as we were passing out the door we paused to hear the report of a special committee

A Hen Conference

BUFFINGTON

whose chairman read the following resolutions: —

Whereas, — It has pleased the Almighty to remove from our midst our greatest Rose Comb Buff Orpington fancier and esteemed friend, Albert Edward Sheridan; therefore be it

Resolved, — That the next edition of our catalogue contain an illustrated memorial page in his honor and

Resolved, — That the Rose Comb Buff Orpington Club extend to the bereaved family their heartfelt sympathy.

The handsome young farmer followed us out to our trap, invited us to attend the next meeting of the R. C. B. O. Club, of which he was the secretary, and asked if I were intending to "show." I introduced Phœbe as the senior partner, and she concealed the fact that we possessed but one Buff Orpington and he was a sad "invaleed" not suitable for exhibition. The farmer's expression as he looked at me was almost lover-like, and when he pressed a bit of paper into my hand I was sure it must be an offer of marriage. It was in fact only a circular describing the Banner Bone Breaker. It closed with an appeal to Buff Orpington breeders to raise and ever raise the standard, bidding them remember, in the midst of a low-minded and sordid civilization, that the rose comb should be small and neat, firmly set on, with good work-

ing, a nice spike at the back lying well down to head, and never, under any circumstances, never sticking up. This adjuration somewhat alarmed us as Phœbe and I had been giving our Buff Orpington cockerel the most drastic remedies for his languid and prostrate comb.

Coming home we alighted from the trap to gather hogweed for the rabbits. I sat by the wayside lazily and let Phœbe gather the appetizing weed, which grows along the thorniest hedges in close proximity to nettles and thistles.

Workmen were trudging along with their luncheon baskets of woven bulrushes slung over their shoulders. Fields of ripening grain lay on either hand, the sun shining on their every shade of green and yellow, bronze and orange, while the breeze stirred the bearded barley into a rippling golden sea.

Phœbe asked me if the people I had left behind at the Hydropathic were my relatives.

"Some of them are of remote consanguinity," I responded evasively, and the next question was hushed upon her awe-stricken tongue, as I intended.

"They are obeying my wish to be let alone, there's no doubt of that," I was thinking. "For my part I like a little more spirit, and a little less 'letter'!"

As the word "letter" flitted through my thoughts, I pulled one from my pocket and

glanced through it carelessly. It arrived, somewhat tardily, only last night, or I should not have had it with me. I wore the same dress to the post-office yesterday that I wore to the Hen Conference to-day, and so it chanced to be still in the pocket. If it had been anything I valued, of course I should have lost or destroyed it by mistake; it is only silly, worthless little things like this that keep turning up and turning up after one has forgotten their existence.

You are a mystery! [it ran.] I can apprehend, but not comprehend you. I know you in part. I understand various bits of your nature; but my knowledge is always fragmentary and disconnected, and when I attempt to make a whole of the mosaics I merely get a kaleidoscopic effect. Do you know those geographical dissected puzzles that they give to children? You remind me of one of them.

I have spent many charming (and dangerous) hours trying to "put you together"; but I find, when I examine my picture closely, that after all I've made a purple mountain grow out of a green tree; that my river is running up a steep hillside; and that the pretty milkmaid, who should be wandering in the forest, is standing on her head with her pail in the air!

Do you understand yourself clearly? Or is it just possible that when you dive to the depths of your own consciousness, you sometimes find the pretty milkmaid standing on her head? I wonder! . . .

Ah, well, it is no wonder that he wonders! So do I, for that matter!

XII

July 17.

THORNYCROFT FARM seems to be the musical center of the universe.

When I wake very early in the morning I lie in a drowsy sort of dream, trying to disentangle, one from the other, the various bird notes, trills, coos, croons, chirps, chirrups, and warbles. Suddenly there falls on the air a delicious, finished, liquid song; so pure, so mellow, so joyous, that I go to the window and look out at the morning world, half awakened, like myself.

There is I know not what charm in a window that does not push up, but opens its lattices out into the greenness. And mine is like a little jeweled door, for the sun is shining from behind the chimneys and lighting the tiny diamond panes with amber flashes.

A faint delicate haze lies over the meadow, and rising out of it, and soaring toward the blue, is the lark, flinging out that matchless matin song, so rich, so thrilling, so lavish! As the blithe melody fades away, I hear the plaintive ballad-fragments of the robin on a curtsying branch near my window; and there is always the liquid pipe of the thrush, who must quaff a fairy goblet of dew between his songs, I should

think, so fresh and eternally young is his note.

There is another beautiful song that I follow whenever I hear it, straining my eyes to the treetops, yet never finding a bird that I can identify as the singer. Can it be the

> Ousel-cock so black of hue,
> With orange-tawny bill?

He is called the poet-laureate of the primrose time, but I don't know whether he sings in midsummer and I have not seen him hereabouts. I must write and ask my dear Man of the North. The Man of the North, I sometimes think, had a Fairy Grandmother who was a robin; and perhaps she made a nest of fresh moss and put him in the green wood when he was a wee bairnie, so that he waxed wise in bird-lore without knowing it. At all events, describe to him the cock of a head, the glance of an eye, the tip-up of a tail, or the sheen of a feather, and he will name you the bird. Near-sighted he is, too, the Man of the North, but that is only for people.

The Square Baby and I have a new game.

I bought a doll's table and china tea-set in Buffington. We put it under an apple tree in the side garden, where the scarlet lightning grows so tall and the Madonna lilies stand so white against the flaming background. We built a little fence around it, and every afternoon at

tea-time we sprinkle seeds and crumbs in the dishes, water in the tiny cups, drop a cherry in each of the fruit-plates, and have a *thé chantant* for the birdies. We sometimes invite an "invaleed" duckling, or one of the baby rabbits, or the peacock, in which case the cards read: —

> *Thornycroft Farm.*
> The pleasure of your company is requested
> at a
> *Thé Chantant*
> Under the Apple Tree.
> Music at five.

It is a charming game, as I say, but I'd far rather play it with the Man of the North; he is so much younger than the Square Baby, and so much more responsive, too.

Thornycroft Farm is a sweet place, too, of odors as well as sounds. The scent of the hay is forever in the nostrils, the hedges are thick with wild honeysuckle, so deliciously fragrant, the last of the June roses are lingering to do their share, and blackberry blossoms and ripening fruit as well.

I have never known a place in which it is so easy to be good. I have not said a word, nor scarcely harbored a thought, that was not lovely and virtuous since I entered these gates, and

yet there are those who think me fantastic, difficult, hard to please, unreasonable!

I believe the saints must have lived in the country mostly (I am certain they never tried Hydropathic hotels), and why anybody with a black heart and natural love of wickedness should not simply buy a poultry farm and become an angel, I cannot understand.

Living with animals is really a very improving and wholesome kind of life, to the person who will allow himself to be influenced by their sensible and high-minded ideals. When you come to think about it, man is really the only animal that ever makes a fool of himself; the others are highly civilized, and never make mistakes. I am going to mention this when I write to somebody, sometime; I mean if I ever do. To be sure, our human life is much more complicated than theirs, and I believe when the other animals notice our errors of judgment they make allowances. The bee is as busy as a bee, and the beaver works like a beaver, but there their responsibility ends. The bee does n't have to go about seeing that other bees are not crowded into unsanitary tenements or victimized by the sweating system. When the beaver's day of toil is over he does n't have to discuss the sphere, the rights, or the voting privileges of beaveresses; all he has to do is to work like a beaver, and that is comparatively simple.

XIII

I HAVE been studying the Young Poultry Keeper's Friend of late. If there is anything I dislike and deplore it is the possession of knowledge which I cannot put to practical use. Having discovered an interesting disease called Scaly Leg in the July number, I took the magazine out into the poultry yard and identified the malady on three hens and a cock. Phœbe joined me in the diagnosis and we treated the victims with a carbolic lotion and scrubbed them with vaseline.

As Phœbe and I grow wise in medical lore the case of Cannibal Ann assumes a different aspect. As the bibulous man quaffs more and more flagons of beer and wine when his daily food is ham, salt fish, and cabbage, so does the hen avenge her wrongs of diet and woes of environment. Cannibal Ann, herself, has, so far as we know, been raised in a Christian manner and enjoyed all the advantages of modern methods; but her maternal parent may have lived in some heathen poultry yard which was asphalted or bricked or flagged, so that she was debarred from scratching in Mother Earth and was forced to eat her own shells in self-defense.

. . . . . .

The Square Baby is not particularly attracted by the poultry as a whole, save when it is boiled with bacon or roasted with bread-sauce; but he is much interested in the "invaleeds." Whenever Phœbe and I start for the hospital with the tobacco-pills, the tin of paraffine, and the bottle of oil, he is very much in evidence. Perhaps he has a natural leaning toward the medical profession; at any rate, when pain and anguish wring the brow, he is in close attendance upon the ministering angels.

Now it is necessary for the physician to have practice as well as theory, so the Square Baby, being left to himself this afternoon, proceeded to perfect himself in some of the healing arts used by country practitioners.

When discovered, he was seated in front of the wire-covered "run" attached to a coop occupied by the youngest goslings. A couple of bottles and a box stood by his side, and I should think he had administered a cup of sweet oil, a pint of paraffine, and a quarter of a pound of tobacco during his clinic. He had used the remedies impartially, sometimes giving the paraffine internally and rubbing the patient's head with tobacco or oil, sometimes the reverse.

Several goslings leaned languidly against the netting or supported themselves by the edge of the water-dish, while others staggered and reeled about with eyes half closed.

It was Mrs. Heaven who caught her son red-handed, so to speak. She was dressed in her best and just driving off to Woodmucket to spend a day or two with her married daughter, and soothe her nerves with the uproar incident to a town of six hundred inhabitants. She delayed her journey a half hour — long enough, in fact, to change her black silk waist for a loose sacque which would give her arms full and comfortable play. The joy and astonishment that greeted the Square Baby on his advent, five years ago, was forgotten for the first time in his brief life, and he was treated precisely as any ordinary wrong-doer would have been treated under the same circumstances, summarily and smartly; the "wepping," as Phœbe would say, being Mrs. Heaven's hand.

All but one of the goslings lived, like thousands of others who recover in spite of the doctors, but the Square Baby's interest in the healing art is now perceptibly lessened.

XIV

July 18.

THE day was Friday; Phœbe's day to go to Buffington with eggs and chickens and rabbits; her day to solicit orders for ducklings and goslings. The village cart was ready in the stable; Mr. and Mrs. Heaven were in Woodmucket; I was eating my breakfast (which I remember was an egg and a rasher) when Phœbe came in, a figure of woe.

The Square Baby was ill, very ill, and would not permit her to leave him and go to market. Would I look at him? For he must have dowsed 'imself as well as the goslings yesterday; anyways he was strong of paraffine and tobacco, though he 'ad 'ad a good barth.

I prescribed for Albert Edward, who was as uncomfortable and feverish as any little sinner in the county of Sussex, and I then promptly proposed going to Buffington in Phœbe's place.

She did not think it at all proper, and said that, notwithstanding my cotton gown and sailor hat, I looked quite, quite the lydy, and it would never do.

"I cannot get any new orders," said I, "but I can certainly leave the rabbits and eggs at the

customary places. I know Argent's Dining Parlours, and Songhurst's Tea Rooms, and the Six Bells Inn, as well as you do."

So, donning a pair of Phœbe's large white cotton gloves with openwork wrists (than which I always fancy there is no one article that so disguises the perfect lydy), I set out upon my travels, upborne by a lively sense of amusement that was at least equal to my feeling that I was doing Phœbe Heaven a good turn.

Prices in dressed poultry were fluctuating, but I had a copy of "The Trade Review," issued that very day, and was able to get some idea of values and the state of the market, as I jogged along. The general movement, I learned, was moderate and of a "selective" character. Choice large capons and ducks were in steady demand, but I blushed for my profession when I read that roasting chickens were running coarse, staggy, and of irregular value. Old hens were held firmly at sixpence, and it is my experience that they always have to be, at whatever price. Geese were plenty, dull, and weak. Old cocks, — why don't they say roosters? — declined to threepence ha'penny on Thursday in sympathy with fowls, — and who shall say that chivalry is dead? Turkeys were a trifle steadier and there was a speculative movement in limed eggs. All this was illuminating and I only wished I were quite certain whether the

sympathetic old roosters were threepence ha'-penny apiece, or a pound.

Everything happened as it should, on this first business journey of my life, which is equivalent to saying that nothing happened at all. Songhurst's Tea Rooms took five dozen eggs and told me to bring six dozen the next week. Argent's Dining Parlours purchased three pairs of chickens and four rabbits. The Six Bells found the last poultry somewhat tough and tasteless; whereupon I said that our orders were more than we could possibly fill, still I hoped we could go on "selling them," as we never liked to part with old customers, no matter how many new ones there were. Privately, I understood the complaint only too well, for I knew the fowls in question very intimately. Two of them were the runaway rooster and the gadabout hen that never wanted to go to bed with the others. The third was Cannibal Ann. I should have expected them to be tough, but I cannot believe they were lacking in flavor.

The only troublesome feature of the trip was that Mrs. Sowerbutt's lodgers had suddenly left for London and she was unable to take the four rabbits as she had hoped; but as an offset to that piece of ill-fortune the Coke and Coal Yard and the Bicycle Repairing Rooms came out into the street, and, stepping up to the trap, requested regular weekly deliveries of

eggs and chickens, and hoped that I would be able to bring them myself. And so, in a happy frame of mind, I turned out of the Buffington main street, and was jogging along homeward, when a very startling thing happened; namely, a whole verse of The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington: —

> And as she went along the high road,
> The weather being hot and dry,
> She sat her down upon a green bank,
> And her true love came riding by.

That true lovers are given to riding by, in ballads, I know very well, but I hardly supposed they did so in real life, especially when every precaution had been taken to avert such a catastrophe. I had told the Barbury Green postmistress on the morning of my arrival, not to give the Thornycroft address to anybody whatsoever, but finding, as the days passed, that no one was bold enough or sensible enough to ask for it, I haughtily withdrew my prohibition. About this time I began sending envelopes, carefully addressed in a feigned hand, to a certain person at the Oxenbridge Hydro. These envelopes contained no word of writing, but held, on one day only a bit of down from a hen's breast, on another, a goose-quill, on another, a glossy tail-feather, on another, a grain of corn, and so on. These trifles were regarded by me not as degrading or unmaidenly hints and sug-

gestions, but simply as tests of intelligence. Could a man receive tokens of this sort and fail to put two and two together? I feel that I might possibly support life with a domineering and autocratic husband, — and there is every prospect that I shall be called upon to do so, — but not with a stupid one. Suppose one were linked forever to a man capable of asking, — "Did *you* send those feathers?" . . . "How was I to guess?" . . . "How was a fellow to know they came from you?" . . . "What on earth could I suppose they meant?" . . . "What clue did they offer me as to your whereabouts?" . . . "Am I a Sherlock Holmes?" — No, better eternal celibacy than marriage with such a being!

These were the thoughts that had been coursing through my goose-girl mind while I had been selling dressed poultry, but in some way they had not prepared me for the appearance of the aforesaid true love.

To see the very person whom one has left civilization to avoid is always more or less surprising, and to make the meeting less likely, Buffington is even farther from Oxenbridge than Barbury Green. The creature was well mounted (ominous, when he came to override my caprice!) and he looked bigger, and, yes, handsomer, though that does n't signify, and still more determined than when I saw him

last; although goodness knows that timidity and feebleness of purpose were not in striking evidence on that memorable occasion. I had drawn up under the shade of a tree ostensibly to eat some cherries, thinking that if I turned my face away I might pass unrecognized. It was a stupid plan, for if I had whipped up the mare and driven on, he, of course, would have had to follow, and he has too much dignity and self-respect to shriek recriminations into a woman's ear from a distance.

He approached with deliberation, reined in his horse, and lifted his hat ceremoniously. He has an extremely shapely head, but I did not show that the sight of it melted in the least the ice of my resolve; whereupon we talked, not very freely at first, — men are so stiff when they consider themselves injured. However, silence is even more embarrassing than conversation, so at length I begin: —

Bailiff's Daughter. "It is a lovely day."

True Love. "Yes, but the drought is getting rather oppressive, don't you think?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "The crops certainly need rain, and the feed is becoming scarce."

True Love. "Are you a farmer's wife?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Oh, no! that is a promotion to look forward to; I am now only a Goose Girl."

True Love. "Indeed! If I wished to be severe

I might remark that I am sure you have found at last your true vocation!"

Bailiff's Daughter. "It was certainly through no desire to please *you* that I chose it."

True Love. "I am quite sure of that! Are you staying in this part?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Oh, no! I live many miles distant, over an extremely rough road. And you?"

True Love. "I am still at the Hydropathic; or at least my luggage is there."

Bailiff's Daughter. "It must be very pleasant to attract you so long."

True Love. "Not so pleasant as it was."

Bailiff's Daughter. "No? A new proprietor, I suppose."

True Love. "No; same proprietor; but the house is empty."

Bailiff's Daughter (*yawning purposely*). "That is strange; the hotels are usually so full at this season. Why did so many leave?"

True Love. "As a matter of fact, only one left. 'Full' and 'empty' are purely relative terms. I call a hotel full when it has you in it, empty when it has n't."

Bailiff's Daughter (*dying to laugh but concealing her feelings*). "I trust my bulk does not make the same impression on the general public! Well, I won't detain you longer; good-afternoon; I must go home to my evening work."

True Love. "I will accompany you."

Bailiff's Daughter. "If you are a gentleman you will remain where you are."

True Love. "In the road? Perhaps; but if I am a man I shall follow you; they always do, I notice. What are those foolish bundles in the back of that silly cart?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Feed for the pony, please, sir; fish for dinner; randans and barley meal for the poultry; and four unsold rabbits. Would n't you like them? Only one and sixpence apiece. Shot at three o'clock this morning."

True Love. "Thanks; I don't like mine shot so early."

Bailiff's Daughter. "Oh, well! doubtless I shall be able to dispose of them on my way home, though times is 'ard!"

True Love. "Do you mean that you will 'peddle' them along the road?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "You understand me better than usual, — in fact to perfection."

He dismounts and strides to the back of the cart, lifts the covers, seizes the rabbits, flings some silver contemptuously into the basket, and looks about him for a place to bury his bargain. A small boy approaching in the far distance will probably bag the game.

Bailiff's Daughter (*modestly*). "Thanks for your trade, sir, rather ungraciously bestowed,

and we 'opes for a continuance of your past fyvors."

True Love (*leaning on the wheel of the trap*). "Let us stop this nonsense. What did you hope to gain by running away?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Distance and absence."

True Love. "You knew you could n't prevent my offering myself to you sometime or other."

Bailiff's Daughter. "Perhaps not; but I could at least defer it, could n't I?"

True Love. "Why postpone the inevitable?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Doubtless I shrank from giving you the pain of a refusal."

True Love. "Perhaps; but do you know what I suspect?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "I'm not a suspicious person, thank goodness!"

True Love. "That, on the contrary, you are willfully withholding from me the joy of acceptance."

Bailiff's Daughter. "If I intended to accept you, why did I run away?"

True Love. "To make yourself more desirable and precious, I suppose."

Bailiff's Daughter (*with the most confident coquetry*). "Did I succeed?"

True Love. "No; you failed utterly."

Bailiff's Daughter (*secretly piqued*). "Then I am glad I tried it."

True Love. "You could n't succeed because

you were superlatively desirable and precious already; but you should never have experimented. Don't you know that Love is a high explosive?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Is it? Then it ought always to be labeled 'dangerous,' ought n't it? But who thought of suggesting matches? I'm sure I did n't!"

True Love. "No such luck; I wish you would."

Bailiff's Daughter. "According to your theory, if you apply a match to Love it is likely to 'go off.'"

True Love. "I wish you would try it on mine and await the result. Come now, you'll have to marry somebody, sometime."

Bailiff's Daughter. "I confess I don't see the necessity."

True Love (*morosely*). "You're the sort of woman men won't leave in undisturbed spinsterhood; they'll keep on badgering you."

Bailiff's Daughter. "Oh, I don't mind the badgering of a number of men; it's rather nice. It's the one badger I find obnoxious."

True Love (*impatiently*). "That's just the perversity of things. I could put a stop to the protestations of the many; I should like nothing better — but the pertinacity of the one! Ah, well! I can't drop that without putting an end to my existence."

Bailiff's Daughter (*politely*). "I should n't think of suggesting anything so extreme."

True Love (*quoting*). "'Mrs. Hauksbee proceeded to take the conceit out of Pluffles as you remove the ribs of an umbrella before re-covering.' However, you could n't ask me anything seriously that I would n't do, dear Mistress Perversity."

Bailiff's Daughter (*yielding a point*). "I'll put that boldly to the proof. Say you don't love me!"

True Love (*seizing his advantage*). "I don't! It's imbecile and besotted devotion! Tell me, when may I come to take you away?"

Bailiff's Daughter (*sighing*). "It's like asking me to leave Heaven."

True Love. "I know it; she told me where to find you, — Thornycroft is the seventh poultry-farm I've visited, — but you could never leave heaven, you are always carrying it along with you. All you would have to do is to admit me; heaven is full of twos. If you can't be happy without poultry, why that is a wish easily gratified. I'll get you a farm to-morrow; no, it's Saturday and the real estate offices close at noon, but on Monday, without fail. Your ducks and geese shall swim on a crystal lake — Phœbe told me what a genius you have for getting them out of the muddy pond; she was sitting beside it when I called, her hand in that of a straw-colored person named Gladwish and the

ground in her vicinity completely strewn with votive offerings. You shall splash your silver sea with an ivory wand; your hens shall have suburban cottages, each with its garden; their perches shall be of satinwood and their water dishes of mother-of-pearl. You shall be the Goose Girl and I will be the Swan Herd — simply to be near you, for I hate live poultry. Dost like the picture? It's a little like Claude Melnotte's, I confess. The fact is I am not quite sane; talking with you after a fortnight of the tabbies at the Hydro is like quaffing inebriating vodka after Miffin's Food! May I come to-morrow?"

Bailiff's Daughter (*hedging*). "I shall be rather busy; the Crossed Minorca hen comes off to-morrow."

True Love. "Oh, never mind! I'll take her off to-night when I escort you to the farm; then she'll get a day's advantage."

Bailiff's Daughter. "And rob fourteen prospective chicks of a mother; nay, lose the chicks themselves? Never!"

True Love. "So long as you are a Goose Girl, does it make any difference whose you are? Is it any more agreeable to be Mrs. Heaven's Goose Girl than mine?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "Ah! but in one case the term of service is limited; in the other, permanent."

True Love. "But in the one case you are the slave of the employer, in the other the employer of the slave. Why *did* you run away?"

Bailiff's Daughter. "A man's mind is too dull an instrument to measure a woman's reason; even my own fails sometimes to deal with all its delicate shades; but I think I must have run away chiefly to taste the pleasure of being pursued and brought back. If it is necessary to your happiness that you should explore all the Bluebeard chambers of my being, I will confess further that it has taken you nearly three weeks to accomplish what I supposed you would do in three days!"

True Love (*after a well-spent interval*). "Tomorrow, then; shall we say before breakfast? Ah, do! Why not? Well, then, immediately after breakfast, and I breakfast at seven nowadays and sometimes earlier. Do take off those ugly cotton gloves, dear; they are five sizes too large for you and so rough and baggy to the touch!"

END OF VOLUME VII

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